THE CULTURE AND ART OF INDIA

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The Social Function of Art
The Dynamics of Morals
The Lord of the Autumn Moons
The Horizon of Marriage



1. Earth Goddess, or Prithvi from Bangkok

THE CULTURE AND ART OF INDIA

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To lie down inertly is to live in the age of Kali, to wake up is to live in the age of Dvāpara, to stand up is to live in the Tretā. To fare forward is to live in the Satyayuga. Therefore move on, move on!

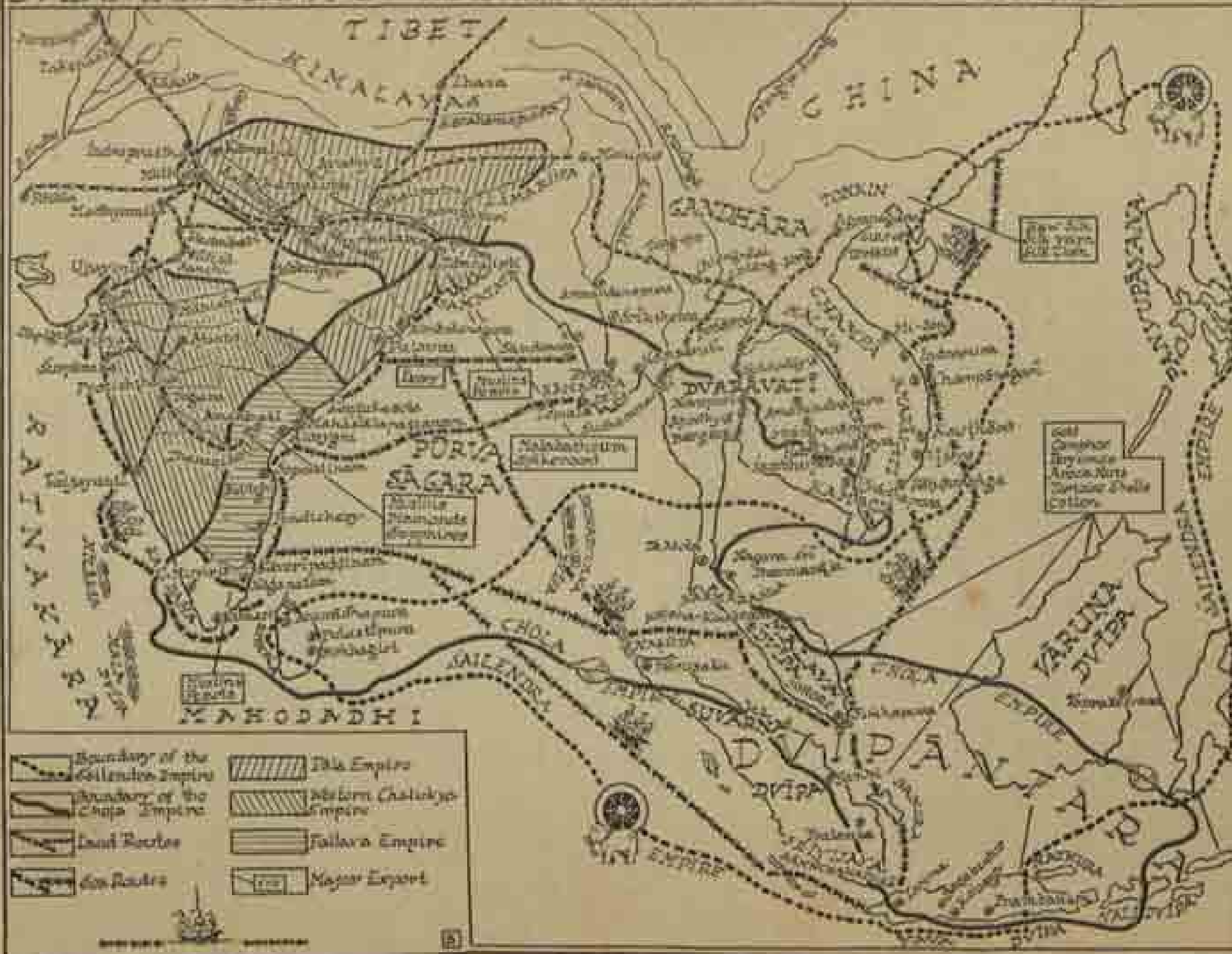
Movement is sweet, activity is luscious fruit, i.e., activity itself is the immortal fruit of movement. Observe the inexhaustible pulsing of the sun: from the very beginning of creation it has gone on, without a day's rest. Therefore move on, move on!

AITAREYA BRĀHMAṆA, 7.15.4-5

I am the Primeval Cosmic Man, Nārāyaṇa; I am the king of Gods, wearing the garb of Indra. I am the foremost of the immortals. I am the cycle of the year, which generates everything and dissolves it. I am the divine yogī, the cosmic juggler or magician, who works wonderful tricks of delusion. The magical deceptions of the cosmic yogī are the yugas, the ages of the world. This display of the mirage of the phenomenal process of the universe is the work of my creative aspect; but at the same time I am the whirlpool, the destructive vortex, that sucks back whatever has been displayed and puts an end to the procession of the yugas. I put an end to everything that exists. My name is Death of the Universe.

MATSYA PURĀṆA

DVIPANTARA-BHARATA: THE MARITIME EMPIRES & ANCIENT SEA & LAND ROUTES OF INDIA



PREFACE

THE civilization of India is of great significance in human history for three reasons. First, its extraordinary continuity for about five millennia is evidence of its vitality, the roots of which, its humanistic spirit and distinctive system of values and social arrangement, throw light upon the perennial sources of mankind's strength and staying power. Secondly, Indian culture has through several centuries established a unity of Asian civilization. The method by which this has been achieved not only represents the special genius of India but also indicates the direction of all history, from specific culture to universal culture, from 'tribe' nationalism to a unified world society, the destiny of the human species. Thirdly, India's reflection on the problems of human life and society, vigorously pursued since the dawn of civilization, has produced and nurtured a mental pattern somewhat distinct from the Western and East Asian. Prominent in this pattern is a boundless devotion to the quest of peace and harmony that cannot but be of interest in a war-sick globe.

The state, politics, and conquest are far less significant in India than metaphysics, religion, myth and art as factors in social integration. There are hardly any people in the world who have been ruled so little by political occurrences—a reign, an invasion, or a war—and so much by metaphysical and religious movements; by scholastic formulations of common myths, norms and social traditions. It is these that have welded Middle, East, and South-East Asia for several centuries into one spiritual community.

Many foreign writers speak of the religiosity of India, but in fact the dominant note of her culture is mythopoeic, metaphysical and aesthetic rather than religious and theological. The myriad names and appearances of her gods—the three hundred and thirty million deities of her mythology—many of whom are assimilated from the cults and beliefs of the non-Aryan peoples, do not trouble the Indian, since all equally embody the same world-transcending metaphysical and aesthetic attributes. In an inscription at the temple of Keśava at Belur, Mysore, there is the following universal prayer: 'May Hari, the Lord of the three worlds, worshipped by the Śaivas as Śiva, by the Vedantists as Brahman, by the Buddhists as the Buddha, by the logicians as the chief agent, by the Jains as the emancipated being, and by the ritualists as the principle of observance, grant our prayers.'

The various scriptures of the peoples may discourse eloquently about the gods and their modes of worship and ritual, but these are silenced before the religious metaphysic of the Vedānta and its triple canon (prasthānas), viz., the Upaniṣads, the Brahma Sūtra, and the Bhagavad Gītā. 'All scriptures become mute when the Vedānta lion emerges, just as the jackals which raise their voices in the forest lapse into silence as they encounter the lion.'

It is the stress in India on purely intellectual and metaphysical traditions rather than theological dogmas and creeds, and the derivation of both cosmology and the system of social values and institutions from the former, that account for the flexibility and catholicity of Indian culture, and the large measure of success it obtained in assimilating alien and backward races and peoples both within the country and abroad. No race could elaborate, as India has done, a myth or fiction of racial miscegenation (varṇasaṁkara) in order to throw open her doors to myriads of inferior and alien stocks. Right from the Upaniṣadic stress on the virtues of compassion, self-discipline and charity, and the austere eight-fold path of the Buddha, the Indian code of Dharma has insisted upon gentleness, tenderness, and non-violence, qualities through which India has tamed and civilized many peoples without the weapons of fire and sword.

The approach to Indian history must, therefore, be integrative and cultural rather than merely political. By concentrating on fundamental 'ideas-in-action', myths and values, order and sequence can be brought into the study of the life and development of this ancient people. Otherwise the invasions and conquests and the rise and disintegration of the various kingdoms and empires in different parts of India would constitute an unreal picture of chaos or a succession of crises and revolutions.

To enable the intelligent layman to read the volume without the distraction of footnotes and references, these have been omitted, except in the text itself; the student is referred to an ample bibliography at the end of the book. By way of illustration, quotations from literary works, myths, hymns and inscriptions have been included, as well as examples of the principal motifs and symbols of Indian art, especially sculpture. With its metaphysical outlook on life, Indian civilization authentically and spontaneously reveals itself in sculpture, the most appropriate medium for recording man's permanent and supernatural values. A time-chart giving the principal events, epochs and movements will, it is hoped, be found useful.

I am thankful to the University of Lucknow for inviting me to

deliver the Radhakumud Mookerji Endowment Lectures in 1956 for which I have utilized certain chapters of this work.

I am grateful to Professor C. D. Chatterjee of the Department of Indian History and Archaeology for several valuable suggestions. Mr Jagadish Prasad Misra and Mr B. N. Srivastava of the same Department and Dr A. C. Banerjee of the Department of Sanskrit have laid me under obligation by revising the proofs. I am also indebted to my pupil Dr Shankar Sahai for assistance in designing the Maps and to Mr Jagadish Prasad Misra for the preparation of a full and valuable Index. I would also thank the Department of Archaeology, Government of India, as well as the State Museums at Calcutta, Patna, Madras, Nalanda, Sarnath and Mathura, the National Museum of India, New Delhi, the Varendra Research and Dacca Museums, East Pakistan, the Bangkok Museum, the Archaeological Survey of Indonesia and Mr Reginald Lé May, Dr Raghu Vira, Mr W. G. Archer, Dr A. J. Ph. Vogel and Mr B. N. Srivastava for lending me photographs and permitting their reproduction in the volume.

The system of transliteration adopted in this work is represented by the following words: Srī Kriṣṇa, Lichchhavayaḥ and Mīmāṃsā.

CONTENTS

ILLUSTRATIONS

INTRODUCTION

THE SPIRIT OF INDIAN CIVILIZATION

The Continuity of Indian Civilization

CIVILIZATION in India is at once more ancient and alive than in any other country in the world. Yet few countries have experienced such invasions and conquests by alien races; even fewer contain such a diversity of natural conditions, customs and languages. The continuity of Indian civilization is largely the outcome of a well-nigh homogeneous pattern of myths and values, and a social order that it has evolved through fifty centuries of struggle, gradual assimilation and synthesis. In this immense territory invasion, war or conquest, if it has welded together or disintegrated kingdoms and empires, has not led to the wholesale expropriation of a population nor to the substitution of one culture for another; it has not materially influenced the habits and character of the Indian people.

The key to Indian life and development is to be found in a certain systematisation of manners, beliefs, and ethos, the balanced pursuit of the four-fold goals of life: Dharma, or absolute righteousness, Artha, or vocation, Kāma, or fulfilment of desires, and Mokṣa, or release, all in a governing metaphysical frame of reference. In the last analysis the essential gift of Indian civilization is the sense of Dharma, for each individual, ethnic group, caste, and vocation; each must pursue, accomplish and, finally, transcend a certain code of duties in accordance with life's demands. Dharma is explained in the Mahābhārata by Kriṣṇa as what protects or preserves: Dharma is what contains both the social order and the cosmic order, which in Indian thought are continuous. It is the divine and transcendental Justice, Truth and Law which uphold universe, mind and people. (Mahābhārata, Udyoga parva, 137, 9). Dharma defines and regulates both the functions of social life and the goals of the individual and is interpreted across the centuries as the unbounded extension of

social relations, as the liberation derived from interdependence and solidarity. The individual's aim of perfection is the same as the group's aim of culture, complete, balanced and practical—the realisation of the Universal Self and the Universal Community, which India names and worships as Paramātman and Nārāyaṇa, identifying the one with the other.

The Indian Philosophy of Culture

The most logical, powerful and august presentation of the Indian philosophy of culture is undoubtedly the famous metaphysical triune image of the Cosmic Spirit, Śiva-Maheśvara, Three-in-One, in the rock-cut cave at Elephanta (eighth century A.D.). The central face is that of Tatpuruṣa-Sadaśiva, or the Absolute, self-luminous, neutral and transcendent; the right face is that of Aghora-Bhairava, or the Terrible One, grim, frowning and defiant in its renunciation and destruction; while the left face is that of beautiful and bejewelled Umā, Śiva's consort, seductive in her playful creativity, love and compassion. In Indian culture Umā or Śakti, who holds a lotus in her hand, symbolises the goals of Artha and Kāma, or wealth, beauty and the embellishment of life. Aghora, who holds a serpent between his fingers, represents the goals of Dharma and Mokṣa, or righteousness and freedom from bondage; while from the viewpoint of the self-absorbed Tatpuruṣa, the alternating, ever-recurrent rhythms of creation and silence, activity and repose are but passing apparitions: they rise, multiply and dissolve, like all phenomenal or Māyic appearances, into Himself. In some variations of this composite metaphysical image, Sadaśiva, as the serene yogi, is as usual in the middle, but Mahākāla, or Great Time, licks blood from a plate on the right, and Mahāmāyā, or Great Illusion, looks at her own beauty in the form of the universe reflected in a mirror, on the left. The Indian philosophy of culture integrates and harmonises the four-fold values (Chaturvarga) of wealth, enjoyment, righteousness and salvation, whether individual or collective, based on the true nature of self and Māyā. This is symbolised in the figure sculpture by the marvellous balance and integration of the three heads of Śiva, achieved through the bold and original use of a common gigantic *mukuṭa*, or royal tiara. In the shimmering chiaroscuro of the deep cave, Śiva's expressive side-profiles seem rather hazy and insubstantial, paling before the majestic presence and soft radiance of His first and real

Essence (Sadāśiva) in the middle. The Supreme Self (Paramātman) in the centre is the eternal, omniscient, unconcerned Witness (*Sākṣī*) of the joys and sufferings of Saṃsāra, which are no more real than the manifold attributes (*guṇas*), names (*nāma*) and forms (*rūpa*) of the One who is attributeless, nameless and formless, and whose intrinsic nature underlies the unity of manifestation and non-manifestation, activity and silence. The One and the Indivisible disguises Himself in the male and female visages or masks, and the contrasted processes of life, mind and spirit that they represent. These comprise the world spectacle as it appears to one in the grip of Māyā or nescience. In the real Self, or Śiva, nothing happens and everything is contained. The real Self is all-full, all-poised, all-silent. The two other faces of Śiva—the empirical or lower selves—are ceaselessly astir and assertive, creating, transforming, and experiencing the phenomenal world. Yet these belong to, and emerge from, the self's higher, immortal, solely real Self (Sadaśiva). Thus the Real, the Eternal and the Infinite gives status to the unreal, the mortal and the finite. Such is the vision of Śivahood, which unfolds the eternal rhythm of life and death, the creation and transformation of the universe, as the pulsation of one's own Self (Paramātman).

Once familiar throughout India and even beyond, in Gandhara, Turkestan and Cambodia, and traced in the Yun k'ang cave in China, and as Dai Itoku in far-off Japan, the Elephanta Śiva-trinity is a unique and comprehensive revelation of the master theme of Indian culture—the sovereignty of Being, Śiva-Ātman, and the unity of consciousness, or the identity of Being and Becoming, of the Real and the Māyic, symbolised and interpreted in Indian experience by the dualism of the masculine and feminine principles. The stones of Elephanta grandly and unequivocally proclaim the profound message of India: 'Activity is true worship when every act is done for the sake of Śiva or the Real Self; silence, again, is true worship when it is the adamantine absorption of self in the Self'. Yet, revealing as it does the three-fold primordial aspects or oscillations of Man and Nature, this image does not depict a deity but rather symbolises and evokes a generic process, the transformation of the human spirit, irrespective of religion and social tradition. It speaks in a universal language, and can elicit contemplation from spiritual persons in any country; it is, indeed, one of the most sublime plastic creations of the world.

The Nature and Rôle of Indian Art

The art of India, like her philosophy and religion, is mythical and metaphysical rather than representational; generic and social rather than individual. In India art (śilpa) is wisdom (jñāna), and myth and poetry (vidyā) are art. It is the metaphysical reality that in its imaginative form or image (mūrti) becomes accessible to man for his contemplation, worship and artistic treatment. Indian art accordingly reveals the transcendent reality in the manifoldness of the phenomenal world, in life in all its levels, reaches and sweeps. It embodies a sense of the intertwining exuberance and voluptuousness of life abstractly and concentratedly. It is at once sensuous and symbolic, luxuriant and poised. The love of the dignity and opulence of man, the thought and power of God, the delight and suppleness of woman are all disciplined and restrained in Indian sculpture and decoration by a serenity and harmony that come from supernatural myth and metaphysics. The dualism of the masculine and feminine aspects of all phenomena in the cosmos and the human mind which is stressed by Indian thought underlies the mythopoeic and pictorial outlook on life in India, and the poetic presentation in her art and literature of permanence and movement in nature and severity and tenderness in human character as rhythms or accents of existence. This, indeed, explains the strange combination of opposites, of classical balance and harmony with pliancy and abandon, in Indian sculpture as in poetry and drama. Indian sculpture has produced idealised, ethereal, yet thrilling figures that miraculously blend masculine dignity and vigour with feminine passion and tenderness, figures that subordinate human personal attributes, including sex, to an abstract and supernatural type—Śiva, Viṣṇu, the Buddha, Bodhisattva and Devī—in India, Java, Siam and Cambodia. Many different Asian races and cultures have reproduced such images, but they are indelibly stamped with a similar metaphysical reality, the more genuine because it is so simple and universal.

Indian art, through the profundity, beauty and variety of its sculpture, has been the effective and fitting vehicle for the spread of Indian culture abroad. Scenes from the Jātakas and Avadānas, the Rāmāyaṇa, the Harivaṃśa and the Mahābhārata could not have been so patiently and exquisitely carved by foreigners on thousands of lintels in Java, Burma and Cambodia had these not been symbolic, metaphysical episodes acceptable to all peoples. The plans of the Borobodur, Angkor and Pagan temples represent symbolic replicas

of the universe, with a regular and definite hierarchy of worlds and planes of life, as conceived in the cosmology of the motherland. The temples of Kambuja and Dvārāvati shew the same arrangement of *sanctum sanctorum*, antarāla and maṇḍapa, śikhara or steeple, as in the motherland, embodying common symbolic principles of temple design which represent man's sacrifice or reintegration with the Universal or Cosmic Man. Mighty currents of Greco-Buddhist and Gupta art and of medieval Dakkhini, Pallava and Pāla art flowed in successive waves to Central Asia, China, Nepal, Tibet, Further India and Indonesia by the mountain routes in the north and the east and the sea-route in the south. It was the art of India that spread Indian myth, metaphysics and dharma, and at the same time led to the astonishing development or enrichment of the regional styles of Pagan, Dvārāvati, Champā, Angkor and Eastern Java.

The Rôle of Universal Myths and Norms in Cultural Expansion

Along with the images, symbols and motifs of sculpture, many Indian holy books have also moulded Asian cultures. The most important are the epics, the Jātakas, the Purāṇas, the Āgamas and the Tantras, and such single texts as the Saddharma-puṇḍarīka, the Prajnā-pāramitā, the Lalitavistara, the Śraddhotpāda, the Abhidharmakoṣa and the Sūtrālaṃkāra. It is only through religion and scholasticism, literature and art that one can reach the soul of India, the underlying inspiration of the formative epochs of her history and its relation to the exterior life. The kingdoms and empires, Mauryan, Kuṣāṇa, Gupta, Pāla, Pratihāra, Pallava or Chola, are important in Indian history not solely for their political integrations but equally for certain universal myths, values, and norms that they derived and elaborated scholastically. Not entangled in infallible dogmas, revelatory creeds and doubtful legends these were able to attract and win over many foreigners or erstwhile enemies whether in the country or outside.

The Mauryan Empire accomplished as much through the systematisation of the Pali canon, the Mānava Dharmaśāstra and the Arthaśāstra, the composition of the core of the Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata, and the promulgation of the True Law by the Rock Edicts, as through the conquest of the north-western borderland, Kalinga and the Deccan. The Saddharma-puṇḍarīka, the Lalita-

vistara and the Divyāvadāna accomplished miracles for millions in the Middle East and South-east Asia for many long centuries after the Imperial Kuṣāṇas of the north had disappeared. The Saddharma-puṇḍarīka, or the Lotus of the True Law, a marvellous blend of religion, metaphysics and poetry, was composed early in the second century A.D. somewhere in the Kuṣāṇa Empire, and translated into Chinese between A.D. 265-316. It became the Buddhist Bible of half-Asia. Like the Bhagavadgītā, whose impress it bears in many important respects, the Lotus is one of the great scriptures India has given to Asia, and, indeed, one of the world's most extensively read books. Aśvaghoṣa's Buddha-charita and Āryaśūra's Jātakamālā, two of the most popular books of Asia, inspired in the reliefs and sculptures of Ajanta, Gandhāra, Lung-men and Borobodur some of the loveliest visions of human tenderness and compassion in the world.

The Golden Age that was ushered in by the Gupta Empire, and that extended from the 4th to the 8th century, owes its glory, not solely to the protection of India against the Yavanas, Śakas, Kuṣāṇas, Muruṇḍas, Pallavas and Huṇas, but equally to the redaction of the Epics and Purāṇas, the systematisation of the Smṛitis, rituals, and philosophical systems, the far-flung missionary enterprises of monk-pilgrims and scholars, and the impulsions provided by the art of Mathura, Banaras and Ajanta. The Tāntrika myth, religion and metaphysics of the Buddhist Pāla Empire of the East still bind Nepal, Tibet, Mongolia, Further India and Indonesia to India. The compilation of the vast Kanjur and Tanjur collection, representing about five thousand works in Tibetan, was completed in Mongolia as late as 1748. A string of Hindu states from Burma to Cambodia and from Java to Borneo also bore witness for centuries to the long process of Hinduisation in the Pacific. The greater part of South-east Asia was included in Bhāratavarṣa and designated as Dvīpāntara. Dvīpāntara literally means the congeries of dvīpas (which are both islands and peninsulas according to Sanskrit grammar) *between* India (antara) and China. A constant stream of migrants, Vaiśya merchants, Kṣatriya nobles, Brāhmaṇa priests and Buddhist monks from India, underlay the foundation of the pioneer colonies in half-barbaric lands, out of which grew across the centuries the great Hindu kingdoms of Suvarṇadvīpa, Srī-kṣetra, Funan, Champā, Panpan, Tambralinga, Śrī-deva, Dvārāvatī, Śrī Vijaya and Majapahit. The stream of emigration from India to Indonesia, which built up a second India between the land masses of India and

China, continued till the end of the fourteenth century. It was only the entry of the Muslim Arabs into Malayasia and the conversion of twenty states to Islam in the 15th century, as well as the ruin of Indian commerce and shipping wrought by the Portuguese and Dutch powers, that interrupted the age-long process of Hinduisation in South-east Asia.

The Mechanisms of Social Mimesis

The foundation of the great kingdoms and empires, which sprang up from Gandhāra to the Deccan and from Gujarat to Gauḍa, was invariably associated with certain Reformations and Renaissances that not only thrilled and captured the whole of India but also often contributed certain permanent and essential elements to Asian development. These introduced a new universalism that integrated diverse backward and foreign peoples through what the historian Toynbee calls 'social mimesis', rather than through the forced processes of conquest and racialism that are so often encountered in the history of Europe, which is as sharply divided as India by natural obstacles into distinct regions and 'nations'. Indian patriotism, therefore, is hardly marked by racial pride and chauvinism, but consists of loyalty to certain universal faiths, myths and values that have come down from the age of the semi-divine sages, heroes and patriarchs. Set in a metaphysical, scholastic frame-work, these are the efficacious means of Brāhmanising heterogeneous races, traditions and beliefs. The social problem of Indian history and the scholastic problem of Indian knowledge are linked with each other. The danger of mimesis which Toynbee stresses, viz., social drill or mechanisation, is avoided both at home among her own backward ethnic groups and abroad in her scheme of acculturation in new lands through 'strenuous intellectual communion and intimate personal intercourse' (Plato).

Bergson points out two mechanisms by which the lead of a given culture is followed by an uncivilized society. 'There are two ways open to education. The one way is by drill; the other is by mysticism. The first method inculcates a morality consisting of impersonal habits; the second induces the imitation of another personality, and even a spiritual union, a more or less complete identification with it'. India has chosen the latter mechanism. Social unity in the Indian settlements, colonies and kingdoms across the seas could only be

maintained by a constant immigration of Brāhmaṇas, priests, scholars and Buddhist monks, from the mythical Agastya (Valaing, Bhṛigu Pulastya and Kauṇḍinya) to Guṇavarman (A.D. 423), Vajrabodhi (A.D. 711), Kumāraghoṣa (A.D. 782) and Dīpaṃkara Śrījñāna (A.D. 1011), along with Kṣatriya warriors, nobles and merchants, and the building of temples, monasteries and hospitals for long centuries. The South-eastern Asiatic outposts of Indian civilization from Java to Cambodia and from Burma to Bali were intrinsically Indian, Brāhmanical, Buddhist or Śakti-Śaiva in their spirit and temper, although the general mass of the population, as has been pointed out by Krom, Stutterheim and others, followed their animistic cults and the worship of their ancestors.

The Fundamental Norms and Postulates of Indian Culture

All Indian peoples, even if their ancestors had been mounted nomads of the grasslands of Western Asia or merchants and traders from the coasts of Iran and Syria, have sooner or later come under the spell of India's sense of the transience of life, the all-pervasiveness of her moral law of karma and transmigration, the belief in an organic or spiritual hierarchy of society, the sacredness of family life and obligations, the ideal of human brotherhood and compassion to fellow creatures, and the aesthetic attitude towards life, with its emotions and sentiments (rasas) treated abstractly, and hence concentratedly. Such are the social universals of an essentially metaphysical and humanist civilization—the broad fundamental postulates of its unity and development—that were recurrently underlined in epochs of empire-building and renaissance, and that kept alive the resilience of the people in periods of subjection and misery.

These were systematised in the Dharma Sūtras, that important branch of ancient literature which lays down the goals, rights and duties of the individual and of functional groups, and the laws and traditions which govern their existence and integral equilibrium in hierarchical relations. The Dharma Sūtras gave rise to the Dharmaśāstras, or commentaries on authoritative texts, which were free from sectarian influences and gave through a whole millennium a metaphysical shape and pattern to the structure of civilization. The Purāṇas, literally ancient lore, sometimes called the fifth Veda and especially intended for the common man, represent both cosmology and history. The Itihāsas comprise accounts of old heroes and heroines

—myths and stories of the primordial events of mankind, which, according to the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, are universal and are recapitulated in human experience. In this sense Itihāsa—for instance, the legend of the struggle between good and evil, between the Devas and the Asuras and between the Kurus and the Pāṇḍavas—repeats itself. Thus another, similar, term is Itivṛitta, which alternates and recapitulates itself through the course of these endless conflicts between the joy and hope of divine victory and the misery and dread of defeat.

The Characteristics of Renaissances and Reformations

There were many more bloodless renaissances and reformations in India than in Europe; while there were hardly any prolonged cultural eclipses or so-called 'dark ages', such as we encounter in the latter continent from the end of the fifth to the middle of the eleventh century, due to the barbarian invasions. Each cultural renaissance in India had its own mythology, ritual formula, notion of karma, and norm of dharma. Each identified knowledge with right conduct and reached the Real both in respect of the Self through the pursuit of universal values, and in respect of the community through the establishment of an all-embracing society. Each, accordingly, was a decisive turning point for a new universalism for people and culture, and a harbinger of a fresh triumph for the spirit of man. If the proper theme of all histories is universal humanity—as the modern philosophy of history insists—and if its trends are to be conceived only in reference to the common adventures and vicissitudes of humanity, and in subordination to its total march, we have a criterion for the appraisal of the various epochs and movements in India, viz., how far these exhibit human freedom, communion and universality. Indian history rightly judges a people, region or age according to its contribution to the common pool of cultural values and traditions, not of the patria or the nation, but of mankind.

The Dharmaśāstras insist upon the adaptation of traditions to changing conditions, provided that these always conform to the first principles, which are eternally binding for the social and cosmic order alike. Morality in India is an application of the true principles of metaphysics to contingent problems. A governing principle of Life, applicable to all peoples, ages and cultures and dependent upon metaphysics, constitutes, indeed, the conception of unity in the

Indian world. Such a basis of unity is to be distinguished from that of racial solidarity in Chinese civilization, that of the Islamic creed and the conception of the Caliphate in the Muslim world, and of Christendom and the Roman Empire, its laws and institutions, in Western civilization. Indian scholasticism, in dealing with social facts and formations and the growth and vicissitudes of man and society, reached profound depths and subtleties, depths unknown to Christian, Jewish and Arab scholastic tradition. Its major problem was the ever-renewed task of Brahmanising a congeries of races and peoples in all stages of culture and economic development through a universal pattern of myth, Dharma and ritual, and a metaphysical formulation of the social order. This gives the key to the historic process in India ever since the conquering Indo-Aryans failed fully to absorb the indigenous Dāsas, Dasyus and Asuras as Ārya Śūdras and Ārya Vaiśyas into the Divine Aryan Society.

The basic patterns of Indian civilization were moulded as much by the religious heresies and reformations as by the orthodox Brahmanic systems of thought. From the middle of the millennium before Christ to the egalitarian movements of Tāntrikism and Bhakti in the tenth to the eighteenth century A.D., these recurrently endeavoured to interpret the pure metaphysical varṇa theory in terms opposed to caste and sacerdotalism, and to assimilate the occupational and backward ethnic groups into the Indo-Aryan fold, while fitting their faiths and traditions into the ancient ritualised intellectual standards of the Brāhmaṇas. What India stands for is not dry intellectualism, formal theology and religious routine but true religious mysticism, which is a dynamic force of social absorption and integration. What is renovating in Indian civilization is the rediscovery of the essential truth and eternal balance of Dharma; what has been socially levelling, uplifting, or egalitarian is not religious rationalism but ardent mysticism. Scholasticism in India, promoting orthodoxy as it did in the midst of 'a bewildering variety of Vedas, Smṛitis, doctrines of the sages, customs and methods' (as noted in the Mahābhārata), was toned down and tempered by mysticism, yoga, and bhakti, which received constant accessions of strength from the cults and traditions of the aboriginal civilization of India. As it fused together the speculative truth, Dharma and moral code and subordinated them all to certain metaphysical categories, it provided the broad norms and myths, art motifs and symbols that promoted the integration of a very great variety of peoples and illumined every sector of life, making possible a rich synthesis of Indian culture from epoch to

epoch. These categories, indeed, give the essential meaning to the cumulative sequence, with its order, consistency and laws, that constitutes true history.

The Hinduisation of Asia

No renaissance or reformation was, again, restricted to the Indian continent. Buddhism, both Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna, Purāṇic Brāhmaṇism, Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism, Tāntrikism, Nāthism and Sahaja, each in its own epoch spread far beyond the frontiers of India. The entire Asian continent from Bactriana to Cambodia and from Japan to Java bears the imprint of successive waves of Indian thought and art. For about two millennia, across the north-western land routes, through Afghanistan and through Assam, Manipur and Upper Burma, or through the passes of the Himalayas to China and Tibet, cultural influences flowed regularly from India to the rest of Asia. In Pāṇini, who is generally assigned to the middle of the fifth century B.C., the north-western boundaries of India include Prakaṇva (modern Ferghana), Kamboja (modern Badakshan-Pamir), Kāpiśa (modern Kafiristan) and Gandhāra, or the valley of the Kabul river. For about a whole millennium the entire north-western borderland of India, including Bactria, Ferghana, Badakshan, Afghanistan, Seistan and Baluchistan, came to be regarded as a division of India—the 'White India' of the Hellenistic peoples. 'White India' remained more Indian than Iranian even after the Arab Muslim subjugation, until at least the fourteenth century. Al-Biruni, writing in about A.D. 1030, records that Khorasan, Iran, Iraq, Mosul and the country up to the frontiers of Syria were Buddhistic.

Indian culture also crossed the Hindukush and Pamir and spread to the basin of the Tarim or Sītā river. Formerly, Khotan was Kusthana, Yarkhand was Chokhuka, Kashgar was Śailadeśa, Kucha was Kuchar, Karashahr was Agnideśa and Turfan was Turapanni. These oasis-cities on the ancient Middle-Asian caravan routes had Indian or Indianised settlements, and worshipped Śiva, Ganeśa and the Buddha; while Buddhist *vihāras* flourished there, as in India, till the beginning of the eleventh century. Even beyond the Tarim basin, in far-off Shan-Shan and in the Tartar countries, Indian texts in Sanskrit were widely used. Central Asia, the cock-pit of this continent, and the Gandhāra region from the valley of Kabul to Balkh, the meeting-place of the Asian trade-routes and the ante-chamber to

India on the high road of migration of the restless and hardy races of Western Asia, suffered many political vicissitudes. The Epithalite Huns conquered the valley of the Kabul in the second half of the fifth century A.D. and destroyed the Kuṣāṇa civilization. After a respite covering the middle of the sixth to the middle of the seventh century, the Muslim Arabs penetrated into the Gandhāra region, and their vandalism from A.D. 652 to 664 dealt the final death-blow to the efflorescent art and culture of the Second Holy land of Buddhism, whence the mighty currents of Mahāyāna Buddhism spread for centuries to Middle Asia and China. Such was the lure of Buddhism that when the Chinese pilgrim Hiuen Tsang (A.D. 630–643) came to Kapiśa in the seventh century, he found the Turkish Rajah a very devout Mahāyāna Buddhist. Even under Hun and Turkish rule the Indo-Iranian borderlands remained Buddhist for centuries.

In the Southern Ocean Dvīpāntara, embracing Further India and Indonesia, was regarded by the Purāṇas as 'nine islands or territories (navabheda) of Bhāratavarṣa, sanctified by the performance of sacrifice, war, trade and other diverse cultural activities'. With its vast temples, monasteries, schools of learning, hospitals and places of pilgrimage, Dvīpāntara Bhārata was indeed, like the valley of the Sītā (Tarim), a second India where China met India half-way by the sea-route.

It is too often forgotten that the speedy and spectacular Indianisation of both Middle and South-eastern Asia was only made possible by Brāhmanical, Buddhist and Tāntrika art, which invested with supernatural loveliness and sensitiveness the myth and doctrine of each new faith that was preached among the less advanced peoples. The 'flight' of the celebrated Udayana image across the Pamir echoes another momentous flight several centuries ago of the portrait of the Buddha from Magadha to Sindhu-Sauvīra, as recorded in the Divyāvadāna. In human history art is the quickest and most efficacious vehicle for the spread of culture in new lands. Many Indian icons, paintings, drawings and models of temples went to East and South-east Asia along with scriptures and literary works in the vast spread of Brāhmanism and Buddhism.

The Age of Asian Unity Fashioned by Indian Culture

Indianism accordingly gave a unity to the civilization of Asia, even as Christianity did to that of Europe. Asian unity passed through

certain distinct phases across the centuries. The first age of Asian unity was associated with the march of Buddhism from Jalandhara, Kashmir and Gandhāra across the Tarim basin (60 B.C.–A.D. 300). The second age of Asian unity was synchronous with the Golden Age of Gupta culture, which extended from about the fourth to the eighth century, and was comparable with the age of Pericles in Greece and of Elizabeth I in England. This was the privileged era which saw the spread of the Mahāyāna in Central Asia, the Indian cultural missions to China and Indonesia and the translations of the Sanskrit texts, the Chinese pilgrimages to the holy land of the Ganges, the glory of the Buddhist universities of Nalanda, Gomatī-vihāra, Navasaṅghārāma, Śrīvijaya, Anurādhapura, Ramaññanagara and Dvārāvatī, the rise of Hindu colonies and kingdoms in Dvīpāntara Bhārata, the development of Sanskrit literature and its spread throughout South-east Asia, and the magnificent sculpture at Mathura, Ajanta, Gandhāra, Miran, Yun-k'ang, Tun-huang, Horyuji, Sigiriya, Borobodur and Prambanan.

That unity lasted until the rise and explosive spread of the militant Arab Muslim culture, which reached Sind and Spain in the same year (A.D. 711), after a whirlwind victorious march across vast regions. Both Asian and European unity succumbed to the devastating onslaught of Islam across the continents. European civilization recovered from the blow after the decisive victory at Tours (A.D. 732); the West Muslim or Moorish kingdom, however, lasted in Spain for another seven centuries, until 1492. The unity of Europe thus received a rude shock; a shock that was repeated in the thirteenth century by the Mongol conquest of Eastern Europe and the establishment of the Golden Horde as a Mongol state. During the seventh century the Turkish tribes swept into Central Asia and for some time endangered the caravan routes from India to China. But the T'ang dynasty, (A.D. 618–907), whose far-flung empire extended from Korea to the Caspian Sea, halted the triumphant eastward march of the Muslim Arabs and gave peace for three centuries, during which monk-pilgrims, scriptures and commodities flowed freely between India and China. Towards the end of the tenth century, the Ghaznavids, Subuktigin and Mahmud (A.D. 692–1186) came into this region. Mahmud, one of the great figures in the history of Central Asia, conquered Khorasan and invaded India several times. It took another five centuries, however, for Buddhism to disappear from Central Asia, after it had transformed itself into lamaist form in the thirteenth century under the regime of the famous Kublai Khan

(A.D. 1214–1294). Meanwhile the ports on China's eastern coast replaced the oasis cities of Inner Asia as a string of gates for the spread of Buddhism, by the land-route from the Brahmaputra valley through Upper Burma to Tonkin, and by the Eastern Sino-Indian sea-route. From the eighth to the twelfth century Mahāyāna, Vajrayāna, Vaiṣṇava and Śakti-Śiva cults and ideas spread out from Eastern India and the Coromandel Coast, and moulded Asian culture from Nepal and Tibet to Malaya and Indonesia, and from Siam and Cambodia to China.

The Response of India to the Challenge of Islam

As in Europe, so in India, Islam could not establish a stable foothold. While the Arab Muslims were able to establish their hegemony over Syria, Persia, Armenia, Egypt and the whole of Northern Africa up to Spain within eight decades, it took more than six centuries after the conquest of Sind and Kathiawar (A.D. 712) for the Muslim empire to consolidate itself in Hindusthan and conquer the Deccan. This was accomplished, after the conquests of Alauddin Khilji (1296–1316), during the reign of Mohammad-bin-Tughlaq (1325–1351). Immediately after his death, however, the empire quickly dwindled. The interchange between Hinduism and Islam on Indian soil during these centuries of tension and conflict released new spiritual energies and provoked egalitarian movements in the bosom of both faiths. These combated Hindu sacerdotalism and exclusiveness on the one hand and Semitic racialism and uncompromising monotheism on the other.

The Bhakti and Sūfi movements, through five centuries of eclectic idealism, brought about a spiritual intimacy between Hinduism and Islam which, indeed, bore a rich harvest in the age of the Great Moghuls. The secular national state of Akbar united the different races, creeds and sects of India, made Persian her official language throughout the land, and gave it that structure of village government and land revenue administration which the British dominion inherited. The Mughal peace, whose duration was about the same as that of the subsequent British peace, fostered a vast, swelling tide of spiritual devotionalism, especially among the lower strata of society. This, with its associated egalitarian movements, was bringing about a profound religious and social synthesis that might have led to the absorption of Islam in the habitual Indian way, but for the

bigotry and iconoclasm of Aurangzeb, who so strikingly diverged from the policy of Akbar and, indeed, from the Timurid tradition. The eighteenth-century bout of anarchy in the country could not, however, totally obscure the visions of loveliness, sweetness and tranquillity that can be seen in the art of Rajasthana and Himāchala. Nor could it obstruct the extraordinary religious synthesis, illustrated by the devotion of large numbers of Hindus to the Hindu-Muslim cults of Pirs, and the conversion of certain Muslims into Vaiṣṇava saints, such as Javana Haridas in Bengal and Sheikh Mohammad, Sheikh Sultan and Shaha Muni in Maharashtra. This tough, unhappy age also witnessed a literary renaissance, stemming from the Padmāvat, the Sūrasāgara, the Rāmacharita-mānasa, the Bhaktamāla, the Chaitanya-Charitāmṛita, the Kavikaṅkan Chanī and the Rāmavijaya—great books that gave solace to the Indian soul amidst confusion and misery. Yet the rapprochement between Hinduism and Islam and the evolution of a casteless and priestless society received a tremendous set-back from the political and social chaos and the military channel taken by the Hindu resurgence among the Sikhs and Marathas, largely as a reaction against Aurangzeb's illiberal policy, and the establishment of the British Raj.

Hinduism and Islam in South-east Asia

Islam not only found it hard to establish a foothold in India but it failed to check the vast swelling tide of Hinduisation in South-east Asia. A third age of Asian unity, following the climax reached in the second age under the impetus of the Gupta and T'ang renaissances, was introduced by the Tāntrika renaissance of culture and art in Eastern India under the Pāla Empire, and its missionary activities in Nepal, Tibet, Further India and Indonesia. This extended from the eighth to the end of the twelfth century, and the foci whence it travelled to foreign lands were the universities of Odantapuri, Jagaddala, Vikramapuri, Phulera, Devikota and Pandita in Bengal. Indian religion, in the forms of Vajrayāna and Sahajayāna, Buddhism, Vaiṣṇavism and the Tāntrika Śakti-Śivaist cult of the Liṅgam, found new syntheses and forms of expression in South-east Asia; while Indian art and architecture reached peaks of glory in the splendid and colossal Brāhmanical and Buddhist temples at Borobodur, Prambanan, Angkor Thom (Nagaradhāma) and Pagan (Arimardanapura) unattained on Indian soil. In fact the most

magnificent temple-cities of the world, real wonders of human engineering, were built in this third phase of Asian unification, contemporaneously with the vandalism of the Turko-Afghans from Somnath to Kanauj, and the consolidation of the Muslim power in Northern India. It was only the Islamic incursion into Malaya, starting from the port of Malacca in the fifteenth century, and the subsequent conversion of its population to Islam, that eclipsed the fruitful trend in South Asia towards a religious syncretism; as seen in the assimilation of Śaivism and Buddhism under a unified Śiva-Buddha form of worship in Java, Sumatra and Bali, of Vaiṣṇavism and Śaivism in the composite worship of Śaṅkara-Nārāyaṇa in Siam, and of Buddhist and Purāṇic Śaktism in the Devarāja and other cults in Cambodia; apart from the Indian fusion of the Trinity, Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva, as recorded in a Kambuja inscription saluting the King of Trees (Aśvattha), which has Brahmā as root, Śiva as trunk and Viṣṇu as branches.

The Identification of Dharma and Bhārata

Geographically speaking, conquest cannot be stable or permanent in a vast sub-continent like India, which has never been a virgin or uninhabited land. Even before the Dravidian or Indo-Aryan advent, the country had a population and a civilization. With a mass of races and peoples at different stages of culture occupying the land, the first problem set before the Aryan invaders was, and remains, the basic problem of Indian history—how to build up a unity amidst the natural diversity of regions, races and traditions. It is the identification of dharma and patria, which was first envisaged in Ṛigvedic culture, that represents the special genius of India. The identity of Dharma and Bhārata with its sense of dedication, is magnificently expressed in the national anthem of the Viṣṇu Purāṇa, composed in the Gupta age: 'Bhārata is the best of the divisions of Jambudvīpa, because it is the land of virtuous deeds. Other countries seek only enjoyment. Happy are those who, consigning all the unheeded rewards of their deeds to the Supreme Spirit, the Universal Self, pass their lives in this land of virtuous deeds as the means of their realisation of Him. The gods themselves exclaim: "Happy are those who are born, even from the condition of divinity, as men in Bhāratavarṣa, as that is the way to the joys of paradise and the greater blessings of final liberation" '.

More than half a millennium after the composition of the Viṣṇu Purāṇa in Northern India, the Bhāgavata, probably written between the ninth and tenth centuries A.D. in the Kaveri valley, similarly extolled Bhāratavarṣa as the land hallowed by the sacred rivers, mountains and holy sites of pilgrimage, and the lives of avatāras, and saintly kings, bhaktas and aspirants. Here God Himself in His grace is born as Man, to obtain the fervent bhakti of sentient beings so that they may win final salvation. Thus the gods prefer birth in this sacred land to enjoyment in heaven, won by so much sacrifice, penance and charity (Bhāgavata, V, II, 19–23). Bhāratavarṣa is not a geographical entity, but an object of worship and reverence—the symbol of the yearning for, and realisation of, the Divine.

India is Saṃskṛiti or Civilization

We cannot adequately understand this principle, the fusion of Bhārata and Saṃskṛiti (moral and spiritual culture), if we permit the bias derived from European history to make us look for the springs of Indian development in war and politics or economic struggle. Neither the Greco-Roman heritage nor Christianity, nor the ambitions of Charlemagne and Napoleon, could give unity to Europe —the continent most harassed by, and prepared for, war in the whole world. While cultural synthesis is the natural key-note of history in a land characterised by a variety of races, languages, traditions and beliefs, how often is it forgotten that the period of Indian freedom covers thirty-seven of the fifty centuries of her development, and far eclipses the period of her subjection, which lasted for only six centuries and a half in medieval and modern times; and, of course, even during that period powerful and autonomous Indian kingdoms —such as the Bahmanī and Vijayanagar kingdoms, the Maratha Empire, and the Sikh Empire—rose as centres of revival!

The role of India's civilizing, humanitarian mission in the neighbouring lands, from Africa to the Pacific and from Iran to Korea, is equally ignored. The same principles of unification that she applied in assimilating different races or ethnic groups on her own soil, grounded on the essentially metaphysical norms of the Equality of Man, the Solidarity of Life, and Universal Salvation, provided the basis for a 'Pan-Indianism' of peaceful, evangelising enterprises for two millennia, to which there is no parallel in world history. Because Indian history is largely a history of myths, faiths and ethos, because

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it is ideological and not political, it has a unique significance in the story of civilization. In a sense, the people of India have a true history that few people possess; and India *is* civilization, providing, as she has done, many races and peoples of Asia outside her own boundaries with a common spiritual and moral basis of unity.

True History, the Movement of Mankind

The obsession with politics or with the role of the state is an obstacle to the introduction and efficacy of an integrative, sociological method in history; a method that seeks by a multicultural approach to interpret broad movements in terms of myths, religions, ethos and art patterns. It is only such a method that can bring order and continuity into Indian evolution; it is this logic that constitutes the unifying 'thread of history', holding together the beads of the various epochs and movements. India has so far managed to maintain an essential unity of her land and culture across the centuries through the universality of her pattern of myth, art and dharma, and the metaphysical orientation of her social order. It is for the future to decide to what extent her distinctive cultural heritage, so strikingly different from the Greco-Jewish heritage of Christian-Muslim civilization, can yet cement, in the present world milieu, the deeper unity and solidarity of Bhāratavarṣa and achieve the high purpose ordained for it by history.

The lapses of the former unities of Christendom in the West and in the Muslim world, the rise of 'nationalities' within more or less homogeneous patterns of civilization, the stresses and strains set up by the forces of economic stability and progress, combined with a wholesale decay of traditional bonds and allegiances derived from religion and metaphysics, have all contributed, through many vicissitudes in modern historiography, towards the exaggeration of first, the theory of a supposed 'pure race', and secondly, the theory of that artificial and fragmentary unit of culture, a 'nation'. Thus history has become in some measure sectionalised, devoted to the rise and fall of separate peoples and cultures, whereas true history reveals a world movement, a broad march of mankind that rests on the pooling of common values and achievements. First, modernism in history, the fruit of the nineteenth-century European expansion and scramble for empire, is pre-occupied with the biases of race and nationalism. How essential it is to remember in this connection the wise remarks

of Lord Acton: 'We can found no philosophy on the observation of four hundred years, excluding three thousand. It would be an imperfect and fallacious induction'. Secondly, the concentration on one nation at a time is entirely congruent with, and supported by, the Hegelian dialectic of the idea in history, from which both the materialistic conception of history and the Marxist school of economic determinism are directly derived—grand but misleading syntheses of human development. Human life and events are many-sided; history, therefore, cannot but be multi-dimensional—ideological, economic, political, military and institutional at the same time.

Myths, the Units of History

For a multi-dimensional approach the basic units of human history, embodying the recurrent patterns in the development of a people, are its great myths or 'ideas-in-action', what Rickert calls 'value-structures', which multiply with passing generations and underlie the continuity of its accumulated traditions and institutions; they indeed, provide the broad or long-range constants pervading civilization. All history is in a sense myth-making, and all myths have wings. The characteristic of Indian myths is that they are anonymous, and shed the special dispositions and idiosyncrasies of individuals. A new faith, metaphysics or creed discovered by the élite speaks to the common people, who are inspired and restrained by virtue of their imageries and incidents, famous sages and devotees. Myths are woven into daily rituals and sacraments, festivals and pilgrimages and construct an invisible order of truth, goodness and justice in India related to the visible order of the cycle of the seasons. Often both cosmic and time-binding, these embody the consensus of the people's experience and wisdom through the generations and are truer than history. In India, among the myths that have historic significance may be included the Vedic myths of Sacrifice and Dharma, Varṇa and Āśrama; the Buddhist myths of world misery and the Eight-fold path; the Mahāyāna myths of universal compassion and universal nirvāṇa; the Purāṇic myths of miscegenetion (Varṇa-saṅkara), Kali-yuga and Āpad-dharma; the medieval myths of Bhakti and the casteless and priestless community; and the late medieval Tāntrika myths of the transformation of the phenomenal world and the consecration of the senses, desires and emotions as fields and forms of Śakti, the dynamic aspect

of the Supernal Essence of Indian non-dualism. Such myths have governed, with progressively greater effectiveness, periods and movements covering several centuries and laid sound and deep the foundations of social institutions and the scheme of life handed down from generation to generation.

The Problem of Periodisation

The 'periodisation' of Indian history is rendered easier by focusing attention on the dominant myths or 'threads of history' that determine or colour the life and tempo of the people; these, after accomplishing a marked change or revolution, contribute certain permanent elements to the cultural heritage as a whole. Peoples, like individuals, have privileged hours or periods in their career. The Vedic Age, the Age of Philosophies and Heresies, the Age of Aśoka, the First Age of Asian Unity, the Age of Neo-Brāhmanism and the Second Asian unification, the Age of the Vedānta, the Age of Tāntrikism, and the Age of Bhakti stand out as the Golden Eras, beacon-lights in the general march of Indian civilization. Each Golden Era is associated with a constellation of myths, values and institutions that have gone to the making of India. Empires and peoples may come and go, but myth and culture go on for ever. It is the continuity of myth, faith and culture that explains social stability in India, and prevents that chaos which usually follows from foreign conquest and the imposition of changes without reference to existing forms and patterns.

A partial or lop-sided approach to history fails to recognise the great formative factors in ancient Indian and Chinese civilizations. The unity of Indian civilization is different in kind from that of the present Western civilization and rests on far deeper and more universal principles; appreciation of this may correct the present emphasis on political and economic principles as the determining forces in the integration of human culture, and on the study of kings and dynasties, wars and conquests.

The Rhythm of Mind and Spirit in History

In the present Western age of India's history it is essential to focus attention to the norms and values that have given stability

to her scheme of life and civilization, so that she may have an orderly development in the face of the vast and antagonistic innovating tendencies coming from the West. After five millenniums of her history India is again experiencing a fresh and fateful renaissance. In the perspective of world history, the progress of a nation depends not on its might in the realm of politics or economics but on its capacity for the appreciation and dissemination of certain universals of civilization that can build up the world community. Jñāna, or knowledge, for India is not detached speculation; it is skill in action (*Yogaḥ Karmasu Kauśalaṃ* of the Bhagavadgītā), which is the goal equally for the Indian individual and for Indian society. The speculative Truth—the framework for the Way of Life—is universal for the individual and society alike. The ceaseless flux and transformation of opposites in the Way of Life or Becoming are presented as Mahā-Māyā and Mahā-Śakti in the synthesis of Brāhmanical and Buddhist Tāntrikism—the last profound Indian interpretation of the world, which, more than the Vedic, governs the mind and heart, worship and ritual of modern India. The Tāntrika world-view is psychological. It introduces into the perpetual dynamism of the transitory, contingent realms of becoming and dissolving—the evolutions of nature and the panorama of history—a new, audacious, Dionysian affirmation. Men, societies, epochs and histories are but myriad, ceaselessly changing manifestations of the Supreme Mother. She is herself the universe and Saṃsāra, the enticement and sorrow of man (macro- and microcosm), as well as his intelligence and release. From the viewpoint of the Spirit of Man, Śakti, his feminine, maternal aspect, is the supreme riddle and quest, and the final consciousness (chetanā) and consummation. Behind her unending sport, the panorama of nature, life and civilization, which is her visible face, there is her veiled face, her transcendent, primordial mystery. Thus the Indian mind and spirit move between the polarities of transcendence and immanence and find joy and serenity in the very confusion and tumult of history. Indian history is an illustration of the macrocosmic balance and rhythm of the human mind and the forces of culture, which have again and again asserted the supremacy and liberating power of universal and transcendental values over conflicts and discords and the chequered course of Life.

The Indian Philosophy of History

The Indian conception of history is skilfully embodied in one of the early extant sculptures at the Buddhist vihāra, or rock-cut monastery, at Bhājā in the Western Ghats, belonging to the late Maurya or Śuṅga renaissance (second or first century B.C.). Vedic Aryan culture provided the Indian political ideal of a sole and paramount monarch of the Universe (Chakravartī), who rules according to Dharma. From this Buddhism derived the ideal of a Spiritual Ruler of the Universe—the paramount sovereign of the spiritual world. The archetypes of such an all-conquering temporal sovereign in Pāli literature are the legendary Dalhanemi and Mahāsudassana and the historical Aśoka. It is not improbable that Aśoka (273–232 B.C.) directed the construction of such Buddhist vihāras. The Mauryan Empire, it should be noted, is mentioned as the Chaturbhāgachakravartī dhārmikadharmarājaḥ by the Divyāvadāna. In Brāhmanical literature Indra and Māndhātā represent the type of the Universal temporal ruler. In the Bhājā relief the Buddha, or his temporal counterpart, Dalhanemi, Mahāsudassana or Dharmāśoka, is mounted on an elephant and accompanied by a minister (both elephant and minister being included traditionally as imperial 'treasures', chakkaratna), symbolising the paramount power wielded by him for the maintenance of Dharma on earth. At the upper left corner of the relief there is much commotion, caused by the elephant as it strides over the landscape and uproots a huge tree, precipitating some human beings. Both the colossal size of the Buddha and his mount and the fury of his passage symbolise his irresistible spiritual and temporal might. On the landscape below is depicted Uttarakuru, the early home of the Indo-Aryans, later on considered to be the Elysium where the Great conqueror finds his ultimate abode, and where are found all happiness and beauty along with complete freedom from desire. Here revel joyous couples, a king with his court, musicians and dancers, and a vast assemblage of people, with the Tree of Wish-fulfilment (Kalpa-druma) in the centre—all minute and insignificant figures crowded in a lively, fluent scene of earthly life. At the lower left is depicted the depredation of the horse-headed man-eating Yakṣi-Aśvamukhī, which the compassionate Ruler discountenances.

The Bhājā relief magnificently illustrates the fundamental metaphysical conceptions of the victory of righteousness (dharma) over evil, the falsity of the world of appearance and enjoyment (rūpa, māyā), and the bliss of the eternal kingdom of righteousness and non-

attachment (svarga). All levels of life, vegetation, tree-spirit, goblin, man, king and god, working out the macrocosmic law of karma according to the Indian conception, are represented here. The countless, toy-like living forms are so carved that they seem to rise and proliferate like thin, evanescent bubbles from the formless, undifferentiated rock, the matrix of the phenomenal (māyic) world, thus symbolising the supreme mystery of creation and the procession of history. Vedic and Upaniṣadic, as well as Buddhist myths, here fuse together in a moral, cosmic interpretation of the human adventure. Life's ceaseless cycle of enjoyment and suffering in various levels, grades and forms is depicted forcefully in a sensuous, piquant idiom that marks an early integration of the commanding earthiness and power of the basic and ancient Dravidian rock-cut sculpture of the south and the harmony and discipline of Indo-Aryan temple sculpture of the north.

The Indian philosophy of history conceives macrocosmic cycles (yugas) or collectivities and macrocosmic Patriarchs (mythical Manus or Mānavas), who give them their proper laws as reflections of the universal order, endlessly following one another in a limitless space-and-time. Such cyclical undulations, the Purāṇas show, oscillate about certain norms posited by the Dharma-śāstras, and they are as real as the norms. Into the ageless cyclical process of the world organism India imports a moral and cultural purpose by conceiving a procession of historical ages, of Kṛita, Tretā, Dvāpara and Kali, in which the moral order of Dharma gradually lapses from purity and perfection into disorganisation and conflict, and then begins another cycle. Kṛita (literally, perfect), Tretā (or three), Dvāpara (or dyad) and Kali (or wretched) are the names of four throws in the Indian dice game. The Bull of Dharma, or ideal righteousness, stands firmly on its four legs in the Kṛita yuga; but with the procession of the Yugas Dharma suffers an eclipse until in the age of degeneration, the Kali yuga, Dharma stands precariously on one leg only, and man and culture reveal their lowest depths of degradation. Kali means also strife or war. How true of the modern world is the Viṣṇu Purāṇa's characterisation of society in the Kali age! 'Society reaches a state where property confers rank, wealth becomes the only source of virtue, passion the sole bond of union between husband and wife, falsehood the way to success in life, sex the only means of enjoyment, and external trappings take the place of inner religion'. According to ancient myth Viṣṇu became incarnate as Rāmachandra in the Tretā and Kṛiṣṇa in the Dvāpara

age in order to show mankind the rule of Dharma. Kalki, the Messiah of the Kali age, is yet to come, to rescue the modern world from war and unrighteousness. The complete cycle of the four yugas is called the Mahāyuga or the Great Yuga—just a single day to the Progenitor (Brahmā), a single kalpa. Over each kalpa presides a mythical Manu, teacher or law-giver. As each kalpa begins, the world is created afresh by Brahmā; during the kalpa it is protected by Viṣṇu, and at its end it is destroyed by Śiva. The universe is not created, but there are pulsations of manifestation and withdrawal, evolution and involution, of the Great Being of the universe in the endless stretches of time and the infinitudes of space.

The Vast Vistas of Yuga

Such breath-taking vistas of time do not enter into the Western philosophy of history. The Great Being says of Himself in the Matsya Purāṇa: 'I am the Primeval Cosmic Man, Nārāyaṇa; I am the source of the universe; I have a thousand heads; I manifest myself as the holiest of holy sacrifices; I manifest myself as the sacred fire that carries the offerings of men on earth to the gods in heaven. Simultaneously I am the king of Gods, wearing the garb of Indra. I am the foremost of the immortals. I am the cycle of the year, which generates everything and dissolves it. I am the divine yogi, the cosmic juggler or magician, who works wonderful tricks of delusion. The magical deceptions of the cosmic yogī are the yugas, the ages of the world. This display of the mirage of the phenomenal process of the universe is the work of my creative aspect; but at the same time I am the whirlpool, the destructive vortex, that sucks back whatever has been displayed and puts an end to the procession of the yugas. I put an end to everything that exists. My name is Death of the Universe'. (Translated by Zimmer).

The Great Being is the Absolute, 'Great Time', i.e., eternity; and the universe and the process of history are empirical and derived being, limited in time and space, i.e., Māyā, or magic. But what is transient and contingent is neither non-existent nor illusory; for it is the creative aspect of Being and as such real and meaningful for man. Bhakti thought, stemming from the Bhāgavata Purāṇa, later stressed the play or sport of the Great Being as the key to his unique power (Māyā) and as underlying the world order—the scene of His supra-sensible enjoyment. The doctrine of Māyā underlines the

contrasts between knowledge and delusion, between 'mirage' and reality, between time and eternity. It does not ask man to treat the procession of the yugas or history as a phantom or an illusion, or to be indifferent to the rhythm of dharma and adharma in human society. Yet it does teach him to treat the yugas, with their Indras, Manus and 'great men', as unreal, passing bubbles that will be broken in the endless onward flow of time. God is the unmanifest, unchanging One behind the manifestation of the universe and the flux of history—the immutable centre of the endless procession of life and history. Veiled by the manifested plurality which is Māyā, Pure Being remains unrevealed. 'I know the beings that are past, that are present, O Arjuna, and that are to come; but Me no one knows'. (Bhagavadgītā, vii, 24, 26). Indian thought does not show the anti-historical attitude of Schopenhauer, who finds no reality in history, a mere mist of illusion on the basis of his subjective idealism. History in the Purāṇas and Itihāsas is not an illusion, though it is not ultimately real.

The Human Meaning of the Cycles of Righteousness

The Indian philosophy of history does not treat the history of the world as the biography of mankind, still less of 'great men'. It speaks in terms not of Brahmās (creators), Indras (lords of peoples), and Manus (teachers), unending though their series is, but of the ageless oscillations of Dharma or Righteousness in the wheelings of time. Dharma, the impersonal aspect of eternity, endlessly pulsates through the eons. Thus the bleakness of the vast extensions of the yugas is replaced by the warmth of value and significance for the human species; for individuals, nations, mankind, can obtain a sense of direction in their world-ages from such a symbolic treatment of time and eternity. In the limited sphere of short human history, where the strangest vicissitudes are encountered, the Indian myth of man's periodic relentless passage from ascent to descent, from perfection to degradation and back again to ascent and perfection, blunts the edges of his ambition and aggressiveness, frustration and misery. The slowly recurring ups and downs of dharma and adharma, the goodness and evil in society, become saturated with the pious expectancy and calm resignation of a finite creature submitting to a grand, macrocosmic pulsation. Indian civilization apprehends time in terms of mankind and the world-organism, and discards both optimism

and pessimism, laying stress on the need for, and the hopefulness of, effort to make things better.

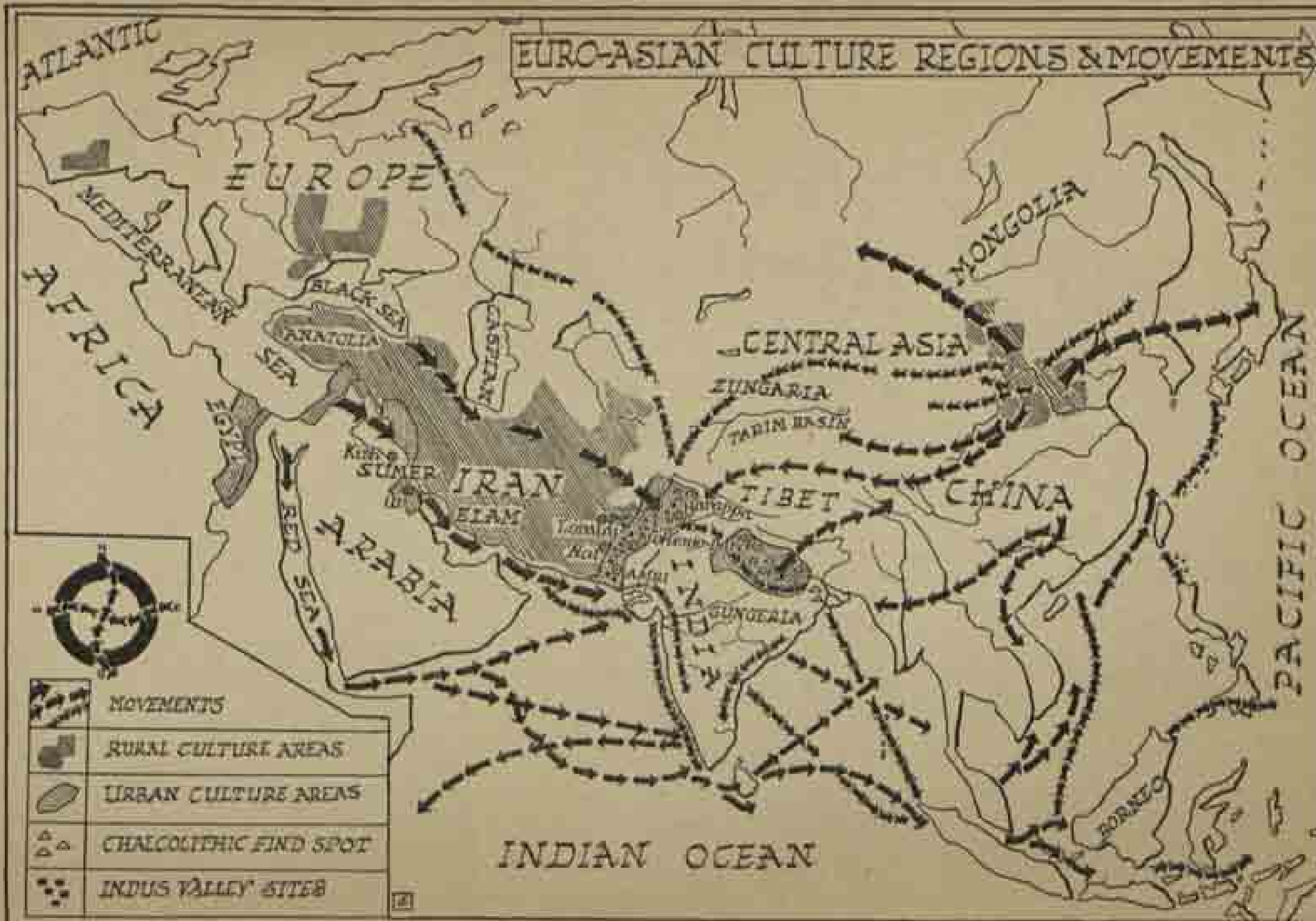
Beyond and behind the procession of the world and its progress, with its cycles of good and evil, is the Great Being Śiva (Goodness or Bliss), who sweeps away the multitude of creatures, men, gods and demons, in space and time, destroying them within himself. Time and Māyā comprise His primordial substance. The tireless dance of the Lord, frantic yet elegant, is the whirl of the yugas, or eons of history. Amidst the triumphs and devastations of history, which follow from, or rather comprise, the foot-falls of His cosmic dance, Śiva in His samādhi remains majestic, unperturbed and omnipotent—the perfect embodiment of the Indian ideal. In plastic representations of Śiva Naṭarāja, as in the metaphysical conception, there is a profound antithesis between the frenzy of Śiva's whirling dance, symbolising the cyclic movements of matter and energy within the cosmos, and the serenity of His samādhi. The Dance of Śiva is one of the great ancient motifs in religion and art in India. If we exclude the Harappa dancing image, which suggests the activity of the pre-Aryan deity that was later assimilated with Śiva, one of the earliest references to His dance in Sanskrit literature is to be found in the Meghadūta (I, 39) of Kālidāsa (c. A.D. 400–455). 'During the evening dance of Mahākāla (Great Time), His numerous raised arms whirl rapidly round in a circle, resembling a forest of trees'. From epoch to epoch the various dances of Śiva—Pradoṣa, Tāṇḍava, and Nādānta—have been differently interpreted, according to the minds and hearts of His devotees; but to envisage the cyclical alterations of history, to ponder the endless ups and downs, fulfilments and defeats, of peoples and civilizations, and to imagine Him rhythmically dancing in the heart of Humanity, is to gain comfort and serenity. Like the triple face of Śiva, the dance image is a majestic synthesis of metaphysics, science and history, and has supreme appeal in India to the devotee, the philosopher and the artist alike.

Cognate with the cosmic dance of Śiva is that of Kāli or Chāmuṇḍā and Gaṇeśa, which in Indian art represents with equal symmetry and sublimity the elemental force through which the universe is created, maintained and ultimately destroyed, corresponding to the primary and original pulse of activity and renunciation of the human soul. Similarly, Mahāyāna Buddhism has created the majestic dance images of Hevajra and Heruka. In such cosmic dance images, with their numerous variations in the complex and vast iconography of the country, India superbly expresses the notion of the cyclic evolu-

tion and involution of the forces of life in nature and history, akin to the primary oscillating moods of manifestation and silence of the human spirit. Man is the echo of eternity. The flow of time and the changes of history are bubbles of the Supreme Brahman or Śiva, fleeting illusions of the māyic worlds of individual and collective existences and manifestations, revealing a continuous rhythm—the dance of Naṭarāja. There is also the significant myth, poetically presented in the Kālikā Purāṇa, of Śiva striding over the earth mad with grief at the sudden voluntary death of his consort, Satī, whose corpse he carries on his shoulders. The gods, in their anxiety for the universe, dismembered the corpse, letting the fragments drop to the earth one by one. The foot-falls of disconsolate Śiva's blind wandering came to be strewn with the remains of Satī's blessed body and became sacred shrines and cities, from Hingula in Baluchistan to Kamakhya in Assam, and from Nanda Devī in the Himalayas to Kumārikā at the Cape. Though the earth broke beneath Śiva's foot-falls and still trembles towards the east, mankind benefited from Śiva's agony; for Satī sanctifies the earth by descending on the fifty-two sites of pilgrimage that mark Śiva's passage, and bestow infinite boons on all nations.

To change the Hindu Purāṇic myth, the Primordial Puruṣa is also Viṣṇu. In the present era, termed the Boar or Vārāha era, Viṣṇu recurrently incarnates Himself as the Boar and rescues the goddess Earth, or Pṛithvī, from the depths of the deluge or dissolution. Earth again and again falls a victim to deluge and dissolution in the slow, relentless march of Space-and-Time. Again and again, the Supreme Spirit Viṣṇu rescues her, casually promising succour in every crisis: 'I will always bear you up (on my arm) like this'.

Such is the debunking, annihilating revelation of the cyclical view of history. In the Purāṇic accounts of man, his history and his destiny, we find a complete discounting of conceptions of value, a sublime indifference, an adamantine neutrality. The Brahma-Vaivarta Purāṇa says: 'Life in the cycle of the countless rebirths is like a vision in a dream. The gods on high, the mute trees and the stones are alike apparitions in this phantasy. But Death administers the law of time. Ordained by time, Death is the master of all. Perishable as bubbles are the good and the evil of the beings of the dream. In unending cycles the good and the evil alternate. Hence the wise are attached to neither, neither the evil nor the good. The wise are not attached to anything at all'. History, like philosophy, teaches sovereign non-attachment.


EURO-ASIAN CULTURE REGIONS & MOVEMENTS
ATLANTIC
EUROPE
MEDITERRANEAN SEA
AFRICA
BLACK SEA
ANATOLIA
CASPIAN
EGYPT
RED SEA
ARABIA
SUMER
IRAN
ELAM
CENTRAL ASIA
ZUNGARIA
TARIN BASIN
TIBET
MONGOLIA
CHINA
INDIA
GUNGERIA
BORNEO
PACIFIC OCEAN
INDIAN OCEAN
MOVEMENTS
RURAL CULTURE AREAS
URBAN CULTURE AREAS
CHALCOLITHIC FIND SPOT
INDUS VALLEY SITES

CHAPTER 1

THE CULTURE OF THE INDUS

The Trade and Luxury of the Indus People

FIFTY centuries ago a wealthy and highly elaborate civilization, which extended from the Simla Hills to Kathiawar, sprang up in the Indus Valley. This area was, in the older climatic cycle, far better watered than at present. The Arabian Sea monsoon then drenched the entire region from Iran to the Punjab and Gujarat. Four great rivers, the Indus, the Mihran, the Sarasvatī and the Dṛiṣadvatī, by their regular floods, were the mainstay of a prosperous agriculture and the wealth and trade of many settlements, of which two large cities, Mohenjo-daro (literally 'the mound of the dead' or 'the mound of the confluence') and Harappa, and thirty-five small ones have been unearthed.

There were many routes by which the Indus-Mihran civilization established a brisk trade and intercourse with the valley of the Euphrates. First, there were the land-routes from near modern Karachi through the Makran and Las-Bela, the Mula pass, and the passes of the Bolan, Lake Phusi and the Gaz valley. Secondly, there was the sea-route along the coast of the Persian Gulf. Both within the boundaries of the Indian sub-continent and externally with the Sumer, Elam and Akkad there was considerable traffic of merchandise. Some scholars identify the Asuras of Vedic literature with the Assurs or Assyrians, who, according to the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, seem to have founded settlements as far east as Magadha. India sent out fabrics of wool and cotton, artistic pottery goods and gold and silver ornaments. That commerce with the West was well developed from very early times is indicated by the discovery of numerous Indian seals of Mohenjo-daro type at different Sumerian and Elamite sites. On the other hand at Chanhu-daro a hair-pin has been discovered resembling pins found in the islands of the Aegean Sea. The Indus Valley women seemed to have adopted their method of hair-dressing from the Sumerians.

A highly sophisticated, luxurious civilization is attested by the use of ornaments of gold, silver, ivory and stones, of household dishes, bowls, vases and toilet boxes and by the vogue of terra-cotta toys of various kinds for children. Stone carving and metal casting attained considerable refinement. The bronze dancing-girl from Mohenjo-daro is full of rhythm and animation, which is stressed by the slimness and angularity of the limbs; it probably represents a courtesan from one of the cities of Mesopotamia. Mohenjo-daro, with its remarkable facilities for land and water communication, was a most cosmopolitan city; at least four major racial types have been discerned there, Proto-Australoid, Mediterranean, Mongoloid, and Alpinoid.

It is not known to what extent the rulers of the Indus Valley controlled the rest of India. But gold and precious stones came from Mysore and stag's horns from Kashmir. Nearer home copper and lead came from Rajputana. Silver must have come from outside India—Iran, Armenia or Afghanistan. It is probable that at the time of the Aryan advent the Indus Valley people controlled the river system of the whole of north-western India. Indra killed the demon Vṛitra, whose home is near the Sindhu, and 'set free the rivers' paths'. He slaughtered Vala, 'burst apart the defences of the mountain and found the golden treasure'.

The Indus Seals

A most interesting view of Indus Valley civilization has been opened up by the discovery of various skilfully fabricated seals bearing representations of animals and pictographic writings. There is no unanimity to-day about the purpose of the seals, while the writings on them have remained undeciphered. Yet over two thousand seals have been discovered, made of steatite, faience, ivory and clay and exhibiting perfect skill and craftsmanship. Seals of the Mohenjo-daro type have also been found in Elam and Mesopotamia, while a cuneiform inscription of the Euphrates valley has also been discovered at Mohenjo-daro. Commerce with the valley of the Euphrates and the Tigris not only led to the interchange of luxuries, ornaments and sophisticated urban habits of life but also of gods and myths. The Indus Valley seals reveal the importation of at least two Mesopotamian legends or deities—the triple-headed, primordial bull, who is the progenitor, and the Mesopotamian hero, Gilgamesh, who by his superhuman strength can easily strangle the great beasts

of the forests to make the world safe for man. It seems that the Indus Valley seals were primarily used for trade and for the protection of goods and property. Cotton fabric bearing an Indus Valley seal has been discovered at a pre-historic site in Iraq. When merchandise was packed in bales these were protected by labels of clay that bore the imprints of the seal. Such seals might also have been used for closing the mouths of bins and vases, and the doors of the houses of rich and poor people alike. In fact everybody seems to have owned and used such seals.

Certain seals found at Jhukar exactly resemble seals from the cemetery at Shahi Tump. From the nature of the seals, and also from the pottery, archaeologists have arrived at a more or less precise stratification of the different layers of this ancient civilization, which they date, almost unanimously, between about 3250–2750 B.C. Quetta, Amri and Zhob preceded the civilization of Mohenjo-daro and Harappa; Nal, Shahi Tump, Jhukar and Jhangar were later centres. The Indus Valley civilization spread up to north Baluchistan in the west, and along the Sutlej river; up to the Himalayan foot-hills in the north; and along the Sarasvatī river in Bahawalpur in the east.

The Amenities of a Highly Developed Urban Community

The cities of Mohenjo-daro and Harappa were quite big and possessed strongly fortified citadels. The two capitals, one on the Indus and the other on the Rāvi, were linked with each other by river transport. The existence of a centralised administration may be inferred from the discovery of commodious granaries and store-houses consisting of rows of long halls. These were probably state granaries such as those of Imperial Rome, where thousands of workers toiled at grain-pounding. Both Mohenjo-daro and Harappa built embankments against floods. Excavations at the former reveal that it possessed across successive centuries an elaborate and efficient system of water-supply, drainage and street lay-out and a uniform, planned pattern of street frontages; all of which indicates a stable civic life and a highly organised administration which the devastating floods could not interrupt. Each house had a well and a bath-room with drains connected to the main street-drains; while some kind of a watch and ward system for the different quarters of the city was also developed. There were public baths, caravanserais and store-houses,

all probably indicative of a large floating population engaged in trade. The abundant forests of the well-watered valleys of the Indus, Rāvi, Sutlej and Sarasvatī supplied fuel for brick-making on a vast scale. It was from India that the elegantly built domestic brick structure spread to the Euphrates Valley, along the Makran-Baluchistan route frequented by thousands of traders and merchants.

The Over-lapping of Indus and Ṛg-vedic Cultures

The culture of the Indus-Miran doab probably over-lapped and intersected the culture of the Indo-Aryans on the upper reaches of the Rāvi, the Sarasvatī and the Dṛiṣadvatī. The valley lying between the dried-up rivers Sarasvatī and Dṛiṣadvatī, later on known as the Indo-Aryan holy land of Brahmāvarta, holds in its womb vestiges of two very ancient civilizations. The Harappa culture has been traced at Kotla Nihang in the Ganges-Jamuna doab, and in the west at Rangpur, Limbdi, in the Saurāṣṭra Union. Recent archaeological explorations conducted in the valley of the Sarasvatī and Dṛiṣadvatī in Bikaner have put on the map nearly a hundred pre-historic sites. These have been grouped by the archaeologist and field worker, M. S. Vats, into: (1) An early series of settlements representing the culture of the Harappa-Mohenjo-daro city states. (2) A group of Harappan affinities but with slight differences in pottery fabric and types suggesting an eastern variety of Harappa culture. (3) A group with painted grey ware and associated pottery distinct both from Harappa wares and those of the succeeding cultures. This group corresponds to the painted grey ware of South and East Punjab and Western U.P., which has lately assumed importance as the potential interlocking key to the Dark Period. The painted grey ware culture seems to have flourished in the first half of the first millennium B.C. (4) A final group comprising comparatively larger sites representing a culture characterised by sturdy and varied pottery, painted with black (or rarely crimson) on red ground, which perhaps flourished in the early centuries of our era. There is no doubt that more explorations in this area will reveal new links between the Indus valley and the Ganges valley cultures.

The sites of both cultures have intersected in the Ganges-Jamuna Doab. There were long drawn-out fights between the Bharata King Sudās and the Dāsas or Dasyus, who were characterised in the Ṛig-Veda as snub-nosed and 'of dark brood', speaking a strange language

and worshipping the phallus. These were probably the Indus people, a Mediterranean stock who had migrated from Iran. The Battle of the Ten kings (Dāśarājña) was fought on the Paruṣṇī or the Rāvī, on which the ancient great city of Harappa stood. Harappa may be identified with Hariyupia, which was, according to the Ṛig-Veda, inhabited by Vṛichivats, who were conquered by the Indo-Aryan clans. The Ṛig-Vedic settlements gradually spread from Sindh to Aṅga and from Kashmir to Malwa and Rajputana. The Vindhyas are mentioned in the Kauśitakī Upaniṣad; while the Sarayū and Sadānīrā (or the Rapti or Gandak) in the east is also repeatedly referred to. Though the Madhyadeśa, the firm middle-land, comprised the core of the Vedic territory occupied by the Kurus and the Pañchālas, the spirit of adventure and enterprise led the Aryan invaders or immigrants to come into more or less continuous contact, and sometimes bloody conflict, with indigenous peoples—the Dāsa-Dasyus and the Niṣādas.

Prototypes of Vedic Deities

In spite of sanguinary battles between the Indus people and the Aryans there must have been peaceful intercourse; for Indian civilization probably took over the worship of the three-faced nude god surrounded by animals, Śiva-Paśupati or Śiva-yogīśvara, from the Indus people. Paśupati of the Indus culture was first introduced into the Ṛigvedic culture as the dreaded deity Rudra, whose alien origin is indicated by the oldest Brāhmaṇas, which warn the Aryan sacrificers against invoking him or even pronouncing his name. He is mentioned indirectly as 'this god' or 'the god whose name contains the word paśu or bhūta' (i.e., Paśupati, Bhūtapati, the Lord of Animals). A Mohenjo-daro figure represents this deity as seated in yogic meditation and surrounded by animals, the elephant, tiger, rhino, buffalo and deer. A Harappa image, called the dancer, suggests Śiva in his dancing posture. Both the Mohenjo-daro image and one of the Harappa torsos have the upward pointing phallus of the ascetic which we first encounter in Indian sculpture at Mathurā, belonging to the late Kuṣāṇa period, and which is discernible in the Gupta sculpture at Paharpur in Bengal and Chaudua in Orissa. A pair of horns crowns his head and he has three faces and eyes, obviously denoting divinity. There is also a trident above the head—the prototype of the Hindu and Buddhist triśūla. An Indus Valley copper seal

represents a yogī with a devotee on either side and coiled serpents facing him. In the Aryan tradition Śiva wears serpents and is Tryambaka, or three-faced, while the Śiva images in Pallava sculpture in the south actually show the Mohenjo-daro pair of horns. Thus the Indus Valley prototype and the Indo-Aryan Śiva, or Rudra, resemble each other in many features and technical details. The phallic emblem of Śiva (Śiva-liṅga) is also met with in the Indus Valley in the form of conical and cylindrical stones.

Similarly the worship of the primordial Mother Goddess, which the Indus Valley had in common with Asia Minor and the Aegean region, and of the personified female organ, as well as of streams and trees and such animals as the bull and the snake, seem to have come down from the Indus Valley culture. The Ṛigvedic Goddesses of Aditi and Pṛithvī are probably derived from the latter. More definitely, the Ṛigvedic mother-goddess, Śrīmā or Śrī-Lakṣmī, of the Gupta period (discovered in the U.P.), who is depicted nude with the lotus issuing out of her body, is derived from the Harappa goddess, who has her legs outstretched and a plant issuing from her womb. In the Aegean the Great Mother is not only the mother of men and animals but she also represents the fecundity of the world of vegetation.

The Indus Valley Contributions to Folk-cult and Magic

The Indus Valley bull, with the altar or manger before it, is the prototype of Śiva's Nandī. But Indus valley art has given an abstract pattern to its muscles, bones and folds of skin that express its massiveness and strength in a way that is unique in the world's animal sculpture. There are horned female figures perched on trees in the Indus Valley culture, prototypes of the tree-spirits of the Atharva-veda and the Yakṣīs of the Maurya and Śuṅga epochs. The tree not only enshrines a deity or tree-spirit but sometimes stands alone protected by a fence, anticipating the Bodhi tree of Buddhist worship. The Indus civilization seems also to have bequeathed to Hinduism the notion of the sacredness of water, which underlay the institution of the public bath on the citadel of Mohenjo-daro and the elaborate provision of bathing facilities in the entire city. The secular and the sacred, the magical and the ritualistic, mix inextricably in the cultures of the Indus and Sarasvatī valleys. Significant also is the correspondence between the longevity charm of scarves draped across the breasts mentioned in the Atharva-

veda and those met with in the terra-cotta figurines found at Kuli, Zhob, Harappa and Sāri Ḍheri and at Ahichchhatra, Kauśambī and and at Mathurā in a later age.

The Atharva-veda refers to the cult of the Vrātas or Vrātyas, a people who offered no sacrifices but believed in magic and charms. According to Pāṇini the Vrātyas lived by violence and depredation. These were probably the Indus people. Certain arts and handicrafts such as handloom weaving, the making of the ox-cart, and glyptic art, as well as village and city planning methods, seem also to have been permanent gifts of the Indus civilization. The Aryans came to the Punjab not long after 3000 B.C. Knowing the use of the sword and the horse in warfare they were easily able to defeat, and finally wipe out, the peaceful, urban, commercial civilization of the Indus region. Indra, also known as Purandara and Purabhid, or destroyer of forts and towns, valiantly leading his hardy, warlike people, obviously played havoc among the settlements and forts of the Indus people, and despoiled their riches.

> 'In kindled fire he burnt up all their weapons,
> And made him rich with kine and carts and horses'

The more ancient, unwarlike and luxurious civilization must have come to a violent end, but not before it bequeathed to its conquerors many of its gods and rituals and arts of living.

The Nāgas in the Jamuna Valley

It is probable that the *modus vivendi* between the two peoples was reached not in Sind or in the Punjab but in the Ganges-Jamuna Doab, where they found themselves facing each other along a narrow corridor, as they both extended the frontiers of their settlements towards the richer Ganges basin. Two episodes, recorded by racial memory in the Indian epic, the Mahābhārata, perhaps indicate certain later phases of the conflict between the Indo-Aryans and the Harappa peoples in the Ganges plain. The burning of the Khāṇḍava forest in the valley of the Jamuna and the expulsion of the Nāgas with their ruler, Takṣaka, who had to take refuge in the hills, may represent episodes where the two great peoples met in bloody conflict. But on the other hand, the marriage of Arjuna with Ulūpi, daughter of the Nāga king, Vāsuki, represents a significant step towards racial

assimilation in the Jamuna-Ganges basin. The snake appears in a Harappa figure on a faience tablet in which a deity with a hooded cobra is worshipped by kneeling men. On a clay amulet the snake appears as being ritually offered milk. The Nāga or snake cult was of importance in Harappa, Elam and Babylonia. The Nāgas, who participated in the Bhārata war on the side of both the Kauravas and the Pāṇḍavas, are not mythical, and may represent the remnants of the Indus Valley people, finally expelled from the Central Gangetic plain to the Narmadā area, where they were located by the Purāṇas.

CHAPTER II

THE CULTURE OF THE SARASVATĪ

The March from Central Asia to the Sarasvatī Plain

SOME time about the third millennium B.C. the Aryans, white-skinned, blue-eyed and shapely of nose, and riding on 'bright prancing horses' and wheeled vehicles, appeared in the course of their migration from Central Asia in the plains of the Indus and the Sarasvatī. They called the region the Sapta-Sarasvatī, or the Land of the Seven Rivers—the Sarasvatī with its associated streams. Winternitz observes that there is nothing to contradict the assumption that Vedic literature extends back to the third millenary and ancient Indian culture to the fourth; a view that is generally accepted as judicious by the majority of Indologists. The affinity between the Vedic people and the Iranians is shown by reference to the Ṛigvedic gods, Indra, Mitra, Varuṇa and the two Nāsatyas, in tablets and inscriptions found in Asia Minor and Anatolia. Indra was of course the chief deity—the leader of armed forces and destroyer of forts. 'Thou goest on from fight to fight intrepidly, destroying castle after castle here with strength,' says a Ṛigvedic hymn. Indra also tore away some of the enemy's 'autumnal forts', probably the protective embankments of the cities of the Harappa civilization. He is moreover the giver of rain, the vanquisher of the demon Vṛitra, 'the obstructor of the rivers'. He 'sets free the rivers' path; all river banks yield to his manly might'. All possible hindrances to the irrigation of the Punjab plains arising from the older Harappa cities and towns, with their massive dams and embankments that controlled the river system of the entire region, were done away with by Indra. 'The mother-earth now brown and bare, will soon a nuptial green robe wear'. Thus the Aryans, who were neither urban dwellers nor agriculturists during their previous history, now settled on the land and learned to practise agriculture and irrigation. They cultivated wheat, barley, rice and maize with teams of six, eight or even twelve oxen driving

the plough, and they parcelled out the land in separate holdings among the heads of families. Indra Vṛitraghna, or Vṛitra-slayer, and Apsu-jit, or 'conquering in the water', safeguarded the use of the annual flood with its fertilising silt.

The Vedic Pattern of Society

The people were divided into four classes, the Brāhmaṇas or priests, the Rājanyas, Kṣatriyas or warriors, the Vaiśyas, who followed agricultural and pastoral pursuits, and finally the Śūdras, the dark-skinned indigenous people, who were occupied as hunters, fishermen and domestic slaves. These classes did not crystallise into castes, and interchange of occupations and inter-marriage among the upper social groups was frequent. The Chāturvarṇya scheme of social stratification and the differentiation between the Dvijas, or the 'twice-born', and the Śūdras, or the sections of the community that had yet to be reclaimed by the Aryan sacraments or saṁskāras, have been a feature of Indian civilization ever since the close of the Vedic period.

Though the boundaries of the social groups were in large measure permeable, Vedic Aryan society possessed the broad four-fold gradation, and the distinction between the Aryan varṇa and the Dasyu varṇa was there, due to marked differences in race, colour, and way of living. The Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad describes the Indo-Aryans as white, brown and dark. All studied the Vedas, but the dark and black ones, referring to the Śudras, were the cleverest, knowing all the three Vedas; the two others knowing only one and two. It was the Vedic fire rituals and sacraments that opened the gates of Aryahood to the Dasyus or non-Aryans, who entered into the Vedic social system as Śūdras. The Śūdras, or rather Ārya Śūdras, could obtain initiation into the highest philosophy, as the stories of Satyakāma Jābāla and Jānaśruti indicate; they could establish the sacrificial fire and also participate in the Soma sacrifice. The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa mentions the Śūdra's role in the Soma-yajña, while the Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa lays down the regulations for the fire ritual to be performed by the Śūdra rathakāra, or wheel-wright. There was accordingly a constant infiltration into the Ārya Śūdra class of the aboriginal Dāsas, Dasyus and Niṣādas; all backward ethnic groups, indeed, waited for admittance into the Ārya varṇa through ritual and learning. Thus the Pañchajanāḥ, or five people, of Vedic literature

refers, according to the Nirukta, to the four varṇas and the Niṣādas. The quadruple varṇa scheme of society, the word varṇa meaning not colour but spiritual attribute (varaṇīya implying the 'elite'), was the gift of the Vedic age to Indian culture, the rules of endogamy and exogamy under the gotra constitution contributing towards varṇa-elaboration.

The free, self-governing Indo-Aryan village under the headman and the patriarchal joint Indo-Aryan family under the strict control of its head set the pattern for the future social structure in India, just as the distribution of holdings, spread out in narrow strips from the village settlement, with common lands and grazing grounds in between, has governed the type of field distribution in peasant farming. Even the planning of Indian villages and towns has through the ages followed the structure of the Vedic Aryan habitation. The village council, an institution that largely explains the stability of Indian civilization, also emerged in the Vedic age; and the grāma sabhā and the larger samiti, or assembly, discharged both social and political functions, setting limits to the authority of the kings or chiefs. A significant hymn of the Ṛigveda thus solemnly evokes the accord of the community: 'Assemble, speak together; let your mind be all of one accord. . . . The place is common, common the assembly, common the mind, so be your thoughts united. . . . One and the same be your resolve, and be your minds of one accord. . . . United be the the thoughts of all, that all may happily agree'.

Gods, Sacrifices and Sacraments

Indra, Varuṇa, Agni and Soma are the most important deities of the Vedic age. Indra was the war-god, Varuṇa was the supreme moral ruler, and Agni and Soma were the ritual deities. Agni is also called Vāk and has three other counterparts, all female deities—Ilā or Iḍā on the earth, Bhāratī in the sky, and Sarasvatī in heaven. Sarasvatī was probably in the beginning a river goddess like Gaṅgā, though much less widely known; but since she was associated with the kindling of the sacrificial fire, which ensured wealth and food, and with the recitation of hymns on the banks of the river, she soon became the symbol of speech (vāk) and spiritual wisdom. According to the Ṛig-veda the Sarasvatī distributes water in all quarters as she supports yajña, which gives wealth and subsistence and illumines the understanding (I, 3, 12). Pre-eminent among Vedic rivers she

reached the sea along the course of the now extinct Ghaggar-Hakra-Nira. The name Bhāratī is derived from the Bharata clan of the Indo-Aryans, which also gives its name to our country. In the Vedic age land, deity, and culture were unified, and later on Bhāratī personified Indo-Aryan culture itself, the expansion of which was in some measure the extension of the kingdom of Bhārata beyond its original home, the land of the Sarasvatī, the Dṛiṣadvatī, and the Āpayā, or Brahmāvarta, as it was later called.

Gradually Ṛigvedic culture extended into the region watered by the Sarayū, the Varuṇā and the Sadānīrā (or the Gandak). The tribal principalities of the older days grew larger through conquest and fusion, and the kings obtained the titles of Emperor or Ekarāṭ and Sārvabhauma, and performed the Aśvamedha and Rājasūya sacrifices. Thus Vedic political integration and the development of Imperial power supplied both the doctrine and ideal of later Hindu Imperialism.

Vedic sacrifices to the deities, mostly the powers of nature, were largely practical and utilitarian, though they received spiritual interpretation in the age of the Upaniṣads. Life itself was regarded as a supreme fire sacrifice. The fire, the sacrificer and the material of sacrifice were all identified with the Supreme, Puruṣa, Brahman or Absolute. All rituals and sacraments in India have been fashioned across the millennia after Vedic metaphysical symbols and patterns, impregnated with cosmic meanings and values. The celebrated Ṛigvedic marriage hymn interprets the partnership of man and woman as the symbol of the marriage of earth and heaven, ṛik and sāman. The bride is transferred to the bridegroom by her successive previous husbands: first, Soma (the primordial deity who is the author of the cosmic laws), second, Gandharva (bestower of sweetness of speech and beauty), and, third, Agni (bestower of purity). The bride, after her brahmacharya and education, becomes through marriage a regular participator in the sacrificial offerings of her husband, in whom she is merged like a river in the ocean. Thus does Indian marriage, as enjoined by the Vedic ritual, become a sacrament. The biological continuity of man is envisaged as the manifestation of the cosmic power of the one who fecundates the process of Nature. His social continuity is similarly conceived in the myth of the Ṛigvedic Puruṣa Sūkta, according to which the various functional groups of the community constitute the limbs—the mouth, arms, thighs and feet—of the Cosmic Person, whence are sprung the sky, the sun, the moon, the earth and all creation. The One becomes many. 'Owing to

the greatness of the Deity, the One Soul is given different names. The different gods are separate members of one Soul'. This is the earliest root-idea of Indian spiritual consciousness that persists across the centuries.

The Perennial Myths and Metaphysics of India

Ṛigvedic thought easily developed from practical and utilitarian prayers offered to the celestial and terrestrial gods to the highest metaphysical speculations. The philosophical hymns of the tenth maṇḍala developed the concepts of Sat (reality) and Asat (unreality), rūpa (deceptive appearance) and māyā (illusion). The Ṛigvedic hymns again and again prefer the contemplation of the One, Indivisible, All-pervading Brahman (parabrahma) to the multiplicity of gods. Verse, I, 20, of the Ṛigveda speaks of the Jivātman and the Paramātman, the individual self and the Over-self, as two birds of the same feather nesting on the same tree, one of which eats its sweet fruits while the other only looks on. In verse III, 62, 10, we have the celebrated Gāyatrī formula, attributed to the sage Viśvāmitra, which states, 'I meditate on the supreme essence of the self-effulgent That, who creates the three worlds. Let That direct all my thoughts, desires and activities'. The Over-self or Paramātman is That—the goal of metaphysics and religion through the millennia.

The composition of the Upaniṣads—Upaniṣad literally means a private meeting between teachers and pupils—marked one of the highest peaks of intellectual attainment in world culture. That women teachers also participated is amply borne out by the famous dialogue, between Yājñavalkya and his wife Maitreyī, and with Gārgī Vāchaknavī. From the Vedas and the Upaniṣads spring forth the perennial myths, metaphysics and morals of India. The conception of the identity of Brahman, Ātman and the Universe is elaborated in the Upaniṣads. This became indeed one of the key doctrines of the Hindu religion. It is remarkable that the theory of the identity of the Ātman with the universe is developed in the conversation between Yājñavalkya and his wise consort.

The celebrated dialogue between Yama and Nachiketas in the Kaṭhopaniṣad probed into the profound mystery of life and death. Yājñavalkya taught the identity of Ātman and the Universe and found the essence of the universe in bliss. Pravāhaṇa Jaivali taught

the mystery of the syllable Om. The philosopher—King Janaka of Videha expounded the transcendental nature of the Gāyatri, which assures immortality. Aśvapati-Kaikeya explained the mystery of the Universal Self, Vaiśvānara. The Deva-Kṣatriya Sanatkumāra taught Nārada, the concept of the whole as at once concrete, ubiquitous and transcendent. Ajātaśatru expounded the differentiation of the three states of consciousness, waking, sleep and deep slumber. All these principles and concepts still constitute the starting point of elevated meditation in India.

The Conception of Dharma as the Moral Order and Truth

The Upaniṣadic philosophers reached conclusions that far surpassed those of the philosophers of ancient Greece and medieval Europe; conclusions which constitute the essence of true knowledge and lead to immortality, *parā-vidyā* or *brahma-vidyā*, which has been the guide and solace of human beings across unknown centuries. The conception of the unalterable and universal Ṛita (literally the realm of the zodiac), Vrata and Dharma, or law and order in the universe and in the moral sphere, was also evolved. It is the same cosmic law which underlies the established courses of the sun and the moon, and of day and night, that binds men and gods. By violating Ṛita man commits sin and has to seek expiation by offering prayers to Varuṇa. The Vedic concept of Ṛita or Dharma as the cosmic and moral order provides the seed for the development of the law of Karma. 'As man has acted, as he has lived, so he becomes; he who has done good is born again as a good one; he who has done evil is born again as an evil one. He becomes good through good action, bad through bad action. Therefore it is said: "Man here is formed entirely out of his desire, and according to his desire is his resolve, and according to his resolve he performs the action, and according to the performance of the action is his destiny".' Thus says the Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad. On the other hand, for the seeker of the highest truth all distinctions of good and bad action, of high and low birth fade away; for he gives up the ephemeral things of life that bind mortals.

In the Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad, moreover, Dharma is identified with Truth, and regarded as the most excellent and final creation of the Supreme Being. There is nothing higher than Dharma. 'Even a weak man rules the stronger with the help of Dharma as with

(the help of) a king'. Thus Dharma underlies the stability of society and the authority of the State. The metaphysical concept of Truth as the supreme principle of order in the cosmos here spills over and penetrates into social relations. Dharma is declared to be superior to might (kṣatra), and is considered as a great moral force guiding social and political life and institutions, which become, indeed, means for the fulfilment of Dharma. The identification of the principles of Ṛita, Satya, Brahman and Dharma, which pervade the Universe, is one of the key doctrines that have furnished the firm foundations of Indian ethics and politics through the ages.

The Quadruple Values and Stations of Life

The Atharva-veda (xii, 1) adds to Satya, Brahman and Dharma the categories of sacrifice (yajña) and penance (tapaḥ), as upholding and sustaining the Universe. We also find in the Vedic age the theory of Māyā, the unknowable Creative Energy that leads to the deception of the mind and senses of man and makes the world the scene of ambition and struggle, which can only be overcome by Supreme Knowledge. While the Upaniṣads emphasise Supreme Knowledge as the means to freedom, the Śrauta and Gṛihya-Sūtras, which govern the sacrificial rituals, formulate the four-fold goals or values of man: Dharma, or conformity to the transcendental order, artha, occupation or livelihood, Kāma, or fulfilment of desires, and mokṣa, or freedom from bondage. These have remained the systematic goals of the Indian scheme of life, giving a balance and harmony to her civilization.

As early as the Vedic period the conception of the imperativeness of man's three-fold social Obligations and Sacrifices was also developed. The Yajurveda, as well as the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa, hold that man is born with three Debts, debts to ancestors or Pitṛis, to spiritual teachers or Ṛiṣis, and to gods or Devas; and these he can discharge only by fatherhood, study, and yajña, as Pitṛi, Brahmachārī, and Yajña. Later on two other debts and obligations are added —those to fellow men (Nṛi-yajña) and to animals (Bhūta-yajña). Thus the Indian is given both the ideal of, and the practical method of achieving, a living harmony with the Universe, his culture and the deity.

The Vedic pattern of life as it developed towards the close of the Vedic period, as the result of social absorption and cultural assimila-

tion, included the four-fold functional or metaphysical ordering of society, or division into four social strata (chāturvarṇya), each with its special characteristics, values and virtues, and the four-fold stations of life (chāturāśramya) of the individual. The varṇa scheme of social division is organic and spiritual, and leaves no room for rigidity or crystallisation through the working of heredity. In the divinely ordained Vedic framework of society it is not a man's heredity, nor his family tradition, but his culture, sociality and moral responsibility that determine his rank, power and prestige. Dharma in the Taittirīya Upaniṣad (i, ii) is associated with the performance of the particular social obligations of the four varnas, and in the Chhāndogya Upaniṣad (ii, 23) with those of the individual's stations of life (āśramas). This aspect of Dharma, orienting man's vocation (varṇa) and station of life (āśrama) in an ordered hierarchy, has moulded the pattern of Indian social institutions ever since. All philosophies, religions and social institutions in India go back to the Vedas and the Upaniṣads. All roads lead back to the habitations and hermitages on the Sarasvati, sanctified by the holy family fire, which is inherited and transmitted across the generations.

The Age-long Inheritance

In Vedic thought Agni is the all pervasive Cosmic Energy, who appears as the sun in the sky and is the source of life, intelligence and bliss. To Agni every morning and evening man offers oblations of goods that he holds dear and precious, to his inner discipline and reverence. The building of the altar or vedī symbolises in India the sacrifice of man to the Cosmic Man, the Virāṭ Puruṣa, who, wishing to create, embodies Himself in the universe. By man's sacrifice or reunion with the Puruṣa, His dismembered body is resorted. The first Indo-Aryan creative work was therefore symbolic, the raising of the Vedic altar, which stands for the constitution of the unity of the universe. The sacrificial altar is called the Chaitya in the epics. The constructed temple of God, the abode of a Yakṣa, the sacred tree, or the tree with a raised altar, all go back to the fire altar. The lowest part and the superstructure (śikhara) of the Indian temple are equally called vedī, both supporting the Prāsādapuruṣa installed in the golden jar at the top of the temple. Thus has Vedic symbolism made temple building, and indeed any work of art, a ritual. The metaphysical notions and symbols discovered in the Vedic forest

retreats constitute the enduring warp and woof of the texture of religion and morality, of the scheme of social stratification, marriage and sacraments, and even of the metaphors of Sanskrit literature, the pattern of art motifs and the lay-out of household altars, temples and habitations in India.

CHAPTER III

THE MAHĀBHĀRATA

CONTINENT, CULTURE AND LITERATURE

The Genesis of the Epics in the Ancient Hero-lauds

MYTH-MAKING and story-telling are characteristic of all peoples in the early stages of their development, and it is fortunate that this is so; for by keeping alive heroic episodes and great happenings, myths and stories contribute much to our knowledge of history. The Aryans expanded far and wide from the banks of the Sapta-Sarasvati where they first settled; they reclaimed forests and marshes, and fought with the non-Aryans, described as Asuras, and also among themselves. From the Battle of the Ten kings on the banks of the Paruṣṇī to the War of Bhārata in about 1100 B.C. sages and poets participated with kings and warriors in bloody conflicts. Vasiṣṭha, Viśvāmitra, Paraśurāma and Agastya all took part in the vast, long-drawn out struggle between the Aryan tribes and the non-Aryans, and in the Aryanisation of Bhārata. The hero-lauds, ballads, and tribal histories recited by bards and poets gradually crystallised into the great epics, the Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata, whose respective celebrated authors, Vālmiki and Vyāsa, are mentioned in the later Vedic texts.

The Story of Aryan Colonisation in the Rāmāyaṇa

The Rāmāyaṇa is older than the Mahābhārata; Vālmiki and the legend itself being mentioned by the latter. The story of the marriage between Rāmachandra and Sītā stands for the supremacy of agriculture, symbolised by Sītā springing from the furrow, over hunting, symbolised by the Great Bow that Rāmachandra bent and broke. These events occurred under the inspiration of the same Vedic sage, Viśvāmitra, of the Kauśika family of the Bharatas, who quelled the

rivers Vipāśa and Śutudrī to enable the Bharata army to cross over for battle. According to Pargiter, Hanūmān is the Monkey-god of the Dravidians dwelling in the forests, whose Dravidian name was first translated into Vedic as Vṛiṣā-kapi and then Sanskritised as Hanūmant. India has now forgotten this semantic transformation. The Ṛigveda x. 86 suggests that there was opposition at first to the assimilation of this aboriginal deity.

The abduction of Sītā by Rāvaṇa and her recovery after the conquest of Laṅkā with the assistance of the Vānara tribes echo the colonisation and settlement of the south. Vālmīki's geography places the impenetrable forest of Daṇḍaka between the north and the south, as the barrier between Aryan and non-Aryan culture, filling the gap between Avanti, Vidarbha, Matsya and Kaliṅga in the north and Āndhra, Chera, Chola and Pāṇḍya in the south (iv. 41). The route taken by Rāmachandra was from Prayāga, through Chitrakūṭa in Bundelkhand, to Daṇḍakāranya, i.e., the Chhatisgarh area of the Madhya Pradesh. Here he stayed for ten years; this was the intermediate area of colonisation. He then proceeded further south and reached Janasthāna in the middle of the Godāvarī area, which Bhavabhūti places east of Daṇḍaka forest. Here he encountered a colony of the Rākṣasas, who used to plunder the settlements and interfere with the sacrificial routine of the Brāhmaṇa sages. It is noteworthy, however, that the Rākṣasas chose to perform rites and sacrifices whenever they needed them to gain their objectives (Yuddha-kāṇḍa, canto 85). The Rākṣasas are specifically mentioned by Pāṇini as a hostile people like the Asuras, whereas the Vānaras, though also inferior, were friendly. In the Battle of Bhārata the Rākṣasas fought on both sides, along with the Nāgas and Piśāchas. D. R. Bhandarkar mentions a ruling family of 'Dharwar, belonging to the Bāli race', as over-lords of Kiṣkindhā. Kiṣkindhā is in the Bellary district, and Pampā-Sarovara and Ṛiṣyamūka hill, where Rāmachandra met Hanūmān and Sugrīva for the first time, are also in the same district. Thus the ancient route of the Indo-Aryan advance from Kośala to the South lay through Bundelkhand to Janasthāna, or the Kṛiṣṇā-Godāvarī doab, and thence extended to Kiṣkindhā, the spring-board of advance to Laṅkā, which in the original Rāmāyaṇa is a town, as pointed out by Jacobi. According to Varāha-mihira it lay on the same meridian as Ujjayinī.

The Sutta-nipāta specifically mentions the Godāvarī valley, south of Pratiṣṭhāna, as being settled by a Brāhmaṇa sage-teacher of the King of Kośala. The Aṅguttara Nikāya mentions sixteen regions or

Mahājanapadas of India. Of areas in the south only Assaka on the Godāvarī and Avanti on the Narmadā are referred to in the list, which covers largely the Ganges Valley, and Gandhāra and Kāmboja from the Indus area. From the Rāmāyaṇa as well as from the above-mentioned Pali texts we can easily deduce that the Godāvarī basin was the earliest seat of Aryan colonisation in the South. The colonisation was hazardous and was undertaken by Ikṣvāku princes, who were perhaps displaced and banished, as Rāmachandra and Lakṣmaṇa were, as a result of court intrigue at Ayodhya. Both the Rākṣasas and the Vānaras are peoples of South India. At Kiṣkindhā, the last stage in the Aryan advance to the south, Rāmachandra cemented an alliance with the non-Aryan Vānaras for his final march towards, and conquest of, Laṅkā. Rāvaṇa is a common title of South Indian kings and was not a ten-headed monster.

The Aryan colonisation of the Vindhyas, Vidarbha, Mahārāṣṭra and Kiṣkindhā from the Madhyadeśa, though it was consolidated by the Kṣatriya princes, actually began with the migration and settlement of the sages and Ṛiṣis, who introduced gods and rituals among the non-Aryans and pursued their routine of sacrifices and sacraments, in spite of harassment and provocation.

Agastya, the Archetypal Sage of Indian Missionary Enterprise

Ṛiṣi Paraśurāma was the pioneer of Aryan colonisation in the Narmadā Valley and along the Arabian seaboard. The entire Western coast from Bhṛigukachchha to the Cape was associated with some exploit or another of his. He was preceded, however, by Agastya, who humbled the pride of the Vindhyas and obtained the right of access to the South, including Java and Sumatra. Agastya is the archetype of the Indian sage, hero and missionary who colonises by the might of Dharma rather than the might of arms; and his exploits are celebrated beyond the ocean, which, according to tradition, he swallowed up in one sip. It is significant that the Indian Archipelago first finds mention in literature, along with the Dakṣiṇāpatha, in the Rāmāyaṇa, and that Agastya, as Śiva-Guru, is regarded as the patron saint of both South India and South-east Asia. In Tinnevelly, there is Agastya's Hill, where the missionary saint dwelt as an anchorite after finishing his work of Aryanising the South. In the Sangam literature we read that Śiva himself chose

Agastya for his colonising task, and that in his quiet retreat on the river Tāmraparṇī he produced, at Śiva's inspiration, the colossal grammar called Agastāyam, the source of the Tamil language and its literature. A book on Indian image-making, Sakalādhikāram, is also attributed to him. Another Dravidian tradition mentions that the sage brought his agricultural colonists to the South from the homeland of Kṛiṣṇa. Agastya had with him also his famous wife, the chaste Lopāmudrā.

The expedition of Rāmachandra was not an aggressive adventure at all. It only accelerated the gradual, peaceful penetration of the Brāhmaṇa missionaries. After his conquest, the territories of the Vānaras and Rākṣasas constituted protectorates within the ambit of Aryan overlordship. In this manner the foundation was laid of a loose, federal type of imperialism, first systematically formulated in the Arthaśāstra.

The tone and temper of Aryan culture were determined not by the Kṣatriya but by the Brāhmaṇa sages and poets. This is very well typified by the genesis of the Rāmāyaṇa itself. On the bank of the river Tamasā, Vālmīki heard the bitter cry of grief of a female Krauñcha bird whose mate had been ruthlessly shot by a hunter. In an outburst of indignation and compassion the great poet and seer spontaneously uttered the first verse (śloka) in Sanskrit literature. Neither salvation, nor knowledge, nor worship, but compassion is the holiest key-word in Indian civilization. Ānanda Vardhana (850 A.D.) refers to the note of intense pathos struck by the first poet, who wrote the epic up to the abandonment of Sītā by Rāma.

There is a Chinese version of the Rāmāyaṇa, translated from an original Sanskrit text into Chinese in A.D. 472, which stresses above everything else brotherly affection and tenderness. The King is called Ten Luxuries (Daśa-ratha). After the banishment of his eldest son, Rāma (Chinese Lo-mo), to the forest at the instance of Bharata's mother; Bharata offers him the throne in all respect and humility. But Rāma insists upon serving the full twelve-year term of exile. After his return Bharata and Rāma offer each other the throne, but neither accepts it. Ultimately the eldest brother acquiesces. Filial piety and fraternal loyalty are the virtues extolled in the Chinese Rāmāyaṇa. These bring about the lasting happiness and prosperity of all people who dwell in Jambūdvīpa.

The Mahābhārata: the Grand Expanding Culture of the Bharatas

The impetus of a common Dharma, or moral code, which governed the conduct of kings, priests, warriors, and ordinary people, high and low, and provided a common set of rituals and sacraments, together with common traditions of heroism, righteousness, and compassion, brought about the fusion of Uttara-Dakṣiṇa and slowly built up the fundamental moral unity of Indian civilization. The Mahābhārata in its cultural embodiment means 'the great tale (itihāsa) of the Battle of the Bharatas' (Ādiparva, 49–99), or 'the sacred lore of the Bharatas that destroys all sins' (Ādiparva, 40–62). The former meaning refers to the heroic exploits of the Bharata clan; the latter refers to the teaching of Krisṇa, which leads to salvation. Hence the Mahābhārata is a mokṣa-śāstra, or the Veda of Kṛiṣṇa (Ādiparva, 18, 23–62), the essence of all śrutis (Aśvamedhaparva, 1–1). Bharata and Bhāratī, or Sarasvatī, the culture, language and learning of the Bharatas are identical (Udyogaparva, 2–71). Thus the Mahābhārata implies the grand culture of the Bharatas.

In the epic that culture is personified in the careers of Kṛiṣṇa and Arjuna, the inseparable pair in whom Nara and Nārāyaṇa, the tutelary divinities of the poem have incarnated themselves. One of the earliest references to the epic is the Aṣṭādhyāyī, which mentions the cult of bhakti towards Vāsudeva and Arjuna (iv, 3, 98). Patañjali makes it clear that Vāsudeva is the name of Kṛiṣṇa, or Kṛiṣṇa-Vāsudeva, who is identified with the supreme deity Viṣṇu, and that his worshippers were called Vāsudevakas. The epic starts with the benedictory verse: 'While adoring Nārāyaṇa (Man the Deity), Narottama (Man the Eternal) and Nara (Man the Mutable) as well as the goddess Sarasvatī, may one make victory issue therefrom'. The epic expounds the inseparableness, like that of Kṛiṣṇa and Arjuna, of other pairs, such as Kṛiṣṇa and Righteousness (Dharma), and Righteousness and victory (Jaya). Arjuna, in making his fateful choice of Kṛiṣṇa as his chariot-driver, in accepting his help and foregoing that of the gods, pledges himself and the Pāṇḍavas to Righteousness and thus ensures the attainment of victory. Even where for the sake of victory Arjuna, Yudhiṣṭhira and Bhīma stoop to unworthy tricks or strategems, and Kṛiṣṇa directly or indirectly supports such unchivalrous conduct, the epic unhesitatingly and unreservedly fixes the responsibility upon Kṛiṣṇa. For Kṛiṣṇa is divine and can best take charge of the course of human events. Once

the side of Righteousness is broadly and irrevocably chosen the end takes care of the means.

Finally, Mahābhārata also means the great land which lies north of the ocean and south of the snow-clad mountain; all its people are descendants of Bharata. The epic glorifies the spread of Aryan colonisation and settlement under the leadership of the Bharatas, to the south beyond the Godāvarī and to the east beyond the Lauhitya, or the Brahmaputra, from their original abode in the region of the Sapta-Sarasvatī. The river hymn of the epic, which replaced the ancient Ṛigvedic hymn, clearly indicates the extension of the geographical horizon and is even now repeated at the time of daily ablution: 'Gaṅgā, Yamunā, Godāvarī, Sarasvatī, Narmadā, Sindhu, Kāveri, join me in this ablution water'. The exploits and wanderings of the Pāṇḍu princes Arjuna and Bhīma during the period of their banishment are placed in far-off nooks and corners of India not as yet Aryanised. Hence the saying: 'Whatever is found in the epic may be found elsewhere in Bhārata; what is not to be found there cannot be found elsewhere'. Yet the centre of Aryan civilization was still the western portion of the Middleland. Even the imperial capital of the Mauryas, Pāṭaliputra, is not mentioned in the epic; it does refer, however, to the more ancient capital of Girivraja, where were kept in confinement many princes for slaughter 'as mighty elephants are kept in mountain caves by the lion'. These are rescued by the Pāṇḍu princes under the leadership of Kṛiṣṇa, the hero and deity of the Mahābhārata.

Kṛiṣṇa, the Statesman and Builder of United India

Vāsudeva-Kṛiṣṇa is not a legendary but a historical figure, who flourished about 1000 B.C. and was one of India's greatest warriors and sages. We shall refer to Kṛiṣṇa the sage and teacher rather than the warrior and statesman in a later chapter. He was the head of the Sātvata or Vṛiṣṇi clan of the Yādavas of Mathurā and Dvārakā, and was head of the confederacy of republican tribes, the Vṛiṣṇis, Yādavas, Andhakas, Kukuras and Bhojas, which foiled the attempt of Kaṃsa to become tyrant at Mathurā. In the Mahābhārata Kṛiṣṇa is the prince of Mathurā and Dvārakā, the friend and the counsellor of the Pāṇḍavas, and the builder of a united India—the Pāṇḍava empire of the Mahābhārata, which was ruled by Yudhiṣṭhira for about 36 years after the defeat of the Kurus in the great battle. The

date of the epic battle is generally placed by scholars in the early years of the Aryan conquest of India, in about 1100 B.C. The Yādavas played an important role in the Aryan colonisation of Malwa, Rajputana, Gujarat and the Deccan, and seem to have developed into a highly mixed race which was on a par with the Asuras according to the Purāṇas. The association of Kṛiṣṇa with the Yādavas connects the Yādava chief, labelled as a Vrātya (outside the pale) by some Kuru minstrels, with leadership in the Aryanisation of the so-called Asuras in Western India and the Deccan.

But Kṛiṣṇa's greatest historical achievement was the unification of India as the culmination of the War of Bhārata. It is significant that the site of the battle is placed by the epic in the region between the Sutlej and the Yamunā, which was the original home of Vedic culture at the time of the early Bharata warrior kings. The epic restores supreme political importance to this sacred area by making it the centre of the new Empire of the Bharatas. The whole of India is brought into the description of the War of Bhārata. Broadly speaking, Eastern, North-western and Western India opposed the Pāṇḍavas, while the Madhyadeśa and Gujarat were on their side. However, it was not arms, nor tactics, nor cunning that won the War of Bhārata, but righteousness, of which the supreme embodiment in the epic is Kṛiṣṇa himself. In section after section, through all the fluctuations of human fortune that go into the making of its thrilling drama, Mahthe ābhārata unequivocally declares that adharma, or unrighteousness, may bring temporary gain to man, but that ultimately it invites irremediable catastrophe. Dharma, or righteousness, is eternal; pleasure and pain are but momentary. Therefore dharma should not be given up for the sake of any desire, gain or profit; it should not be abandoned out of fear, or for the protection and furtherance of earthly existence. That is the authentic voice of India speaking through the ages. The path of Dharma yields all that man desires. Kṛiṣṇa represents the omnipotent and all-pervasive destiny of Dharma that prevails over human life and purpose. The Mahābhārata repeatedly declares: 'Dharma is on the side which claims Kṛiṣṇa, and victory is assured for the side which stands for dharma.' We read in the last, and perhaps the most pregnant, śloka of the Bhagavadīgātā, 'Wherever there is the combination of the Divine purpose (yoga) of Kṛiṣṇa and the indomitable determination and valour of Arjuna, the wielder of the gāṇḍiva bow, there will surely be the blessings of fortune, welfare, success, and eternal justice for the people'.

The Aftermath of the Battle of Bhārata

The account of the death of Kṛiṣṇa in the Musalaparva is one of the most sublime and dramatic sections of the Mahābhārata. The wantonness and self-indulgence of Kṛiṣṇa's kinsmen, the Vṛiṣṇis of Dvārakā, led not only to their own self-destruction, but also to the departure of Kṛiṣṇa and Balarāma from the world in shame and grief. After the Battle of Bhārata the foolish and intoxicated Vṛiṣṇis, indulging in drink and revelry, entered into another fratricidal war. In their insensate fury they slaughtered themselves. Even the tall, thin rushes which fringed the sea-beach were transformed into death-dealing iron maces that aided them in their vast, thoughtless mutual destruction. Thus the curse of the sages, who were grossly insulted by the arrogant and irreverent Vṛiṣṇis, came to be true. Death stalked the city. The surviving population was completely demoralised. At this Balarāma sank to the ground and gave up his life in yoga. Kṛiṣṇa also retired to the wooded beach and reclined on the ground in deep meditation. There a hunter, mistaking him for a wild animal, shot him with an arrow that pierced his sole. Thus did Kṛiṣṇa-Vāsudeva abandon his mortal frame and end his career as Avatāra on the earth.

Arjuna came to Dvārakā on hearing of the death of Kṛiṣṇa, and great was his grief at the sight of the slaughter. He led Kṛiṣṇa's sixteen thousand wives, along with old men and children, out of Dvārakā to Kurukṣetra. But on the way the party was attacked by robbers, who carried off many women. To his amazement Arjuna found himself completely bereft of his former prowess, too feeble even to raise his own famous gāṇḍīva bow. Kṛiṣṇa is the soul of Arjuna, as Arjuna is the soul of Kṛiṣṇa (Sabhāparva, 31–53). Again, Arjuna is Kṛiṣṇa's other half (Droṇaparva, 32–77). It is not surprising that with the departure of the Divine Kṛiṣṇa, his Supreme Self, Arjuna is incapacitated and becomes unfit even for the protection of his kith and kin.

The sanguinary fratricidal struggle between members of the royal house of the Bharatas in about 1000 B.C. left a deep imprint upon the mind of the Indian people. It took nearly a whole millennium after the epic war for the ballads, hero-lauds, clan histories, stories and sermons to crystallise into the Mahābhārata, a process which was completed in the early centuries of the Christian era. Both Pāṇini and Āśvalāyana mention a Bhārata and a Mahābhārata. The former was the original work of Vyāsa and comprised 24,000 stanzas.

Handed down by the bards, it was later expanded into the Mahābhārata by the Bhṛigus, who incorporated into it various myths and legends, as well as moral and religious material. According to tradition Āśvalāyana was a pupil of Śaunaka, whose name is linked with the final redaction of the epic. The inspiration and structure of the great epic are of course derived from the ancient and revered poet and sage Vyāsadeva.

Kṛiṣṇa-Dvaipāyana, Poet and Seer of a New Religion and Philosophy

Vyāsa and Kṛiṣṇa, poet and hero, are the two outstanding torch-bearers of Indian culture. The first is the typical seer, ascetic and prophet; the second is the superman and ever-triumphant happy warrior and hero in the battle for Dharma. The seer and the hero are both equally extolled by the Mahābhārata and the Viṣṇu and Bhāgavata Purāṇas. The seer is given the honorific title Veda-Vyāsa, and is credited with having divided the original Veda into four Saṃhitās and entrusted the teaching of them to four different pupils. This is of course a myth. But Vyāsa, alias Kṛiṣṇa-Dvaipāyana, as the author of the core of the Mahābhārata and of the Bhagavadgītā, justly deserves honour. For it is he who was responsible for expounding Kṛiṣṇa-Bhāgavatism, or the new Pāñcharātra creed, in such a manner that it did not become a heresy like Jainism and Buddhism but was, on the contrary, fully assimilated into the general trend of Upaniṣadic thought. Further, Vyāsa stressed an eclecticism and spirit of tolerance towards Śaivism and Śaktism that has since become a leading characteristic of popular Hinduism. The universality and synthesising quality of the Gītā fully justify its claim to rank next only to the Śruti and the highest among the Smṛitis in Brāhmanism. There is no reference to Vyāsa as a seer anywhere in Vedic lore, and he actually had nothing to do with the differentiation of the three Vedas, which existed, indeed, long before the epic period; the legend was started to add sanctity to his name in Brāhmanism. Yet great reverence is due to him as the philosopher and apostle of Bhāgavata Dharma. Greater glory redounds to him as the poet and story-teller, the statesman and sage in action who could appreciate fully the menace to Indian soil and dharma of the invasions and conquests of the dāruṇa Mlechchhas, the formidable, outlandish barbarians that were penetrating even into the holy land of the Ganges.

The Place of the Indian Epics in Asian Culture

The Mahābhārata, as we have seen, is the glorification of a United India, brought under the imperial authority of Yudhiṣṭhira as a Chakravartin, with his capital in the holy land, once celebrated for Vedic learning and culture. But it is also the compendium of youthful fantasies, romances and heroic episodes, tales of righteousness and wickedness, maxims and sermons, austerities and penances that has governed the pattern of conduct not merely of the Indian people but also of peoples from Central and Western Asia to Java, Cambodia and the island of Bali. Even now the stories of the Mahābhārata are recited, dramatised and refashioned according to modern cultural needs over a vast section of South and East Asia, just as they were alluded to in inscriptions and represented in art in the past. Essentially the Mahābhārata is Indian culture, and this holds good as much for the Hindu colonies and kingdoms of Middle and South Asia as it does for the mother-country. Coedes, the well-known historian of South-east Asia, remarks: 'From one end of Further India to the other spectators still continue to weep over the tribulation of Rāma and Sītā'. Similarly the story of the Kurus and Pāṇḍavas is still the theme of many a play, puppet-show and pageant in Indonesia. In Java the Ādi, Virāṭa and Bhiṣma parvas of the Indian Mahābhārata, in condensed form in the Kavi language, are still taught and read widely. The Javanese author has summarised the major portion of the Gītā and, citing its ślokas, made comments thereon. The literatures of Indonesia, Burma, Siam and Cambodia have all derived their raw materials from the Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata; and Hanūmāna, Sugrīva and Arjuna have moulded human character as much in these countries as in the home-land. The epic has such universal appeal because it is an itihāsa in the generic sense of the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa—an account of primordial events that indeed hold good for all times and places. Its basic theme is the ancient mythical conflict of Devas and Asuras, recounted in terms of the Pāṇḍavas and the Kauravas. It deals with the goodness and wickedness of humanity, qualities that recur in human experience throughout the generations and in every land.

The vacillation and ultimate triumph of Arjuna, the purity and wisdom of Bhiṣma, the even temper and sense of justice of Yudhiṣṭhira, and the sweetness and fidelity of Sāvitrī, Draupadī, and Damayantī have gone into the making of the character and temperament of millions of people, to an extent that has hardly a parallel

in the myths and legends of any other country. Great kings of the past used to emulate the warriors of the Mahābhārata. In the Nasik inscription of Śrī Pulumāyi we read that 'his bravery is that of the heroes of the Mahābhārata'. Arjuna and Yudhiṣṭhira, in the dramatic adventures that many regard as the kernel of the epic, are still models of conduct for the Indian man; and as for the womenfolk, even now a Vrata, or festival, in honour of Sāvitrī is celebrated by married women throughout the length and breadth of the land in order to secure a long and happy conjugal life.

The splendour of the Mahābhārata lies, however, not merely in its epic story-telling. It unfolds a new philosophy of life for India grounded in the cult of bhakti of Kṛiṣṇa-Bhāgavatism, which found its supreme expression in the Nārāyaṇīya section and in the Bhagavadgītā. The latter contains a tremendous vision of God in the cosmos, though even more significant is the realisation of His humanity—the search for God in all men and in all human relations. We shall deal with this new element in Indian culture in a later chapter.

On the organisation of society, too, the Mahābhārata is authoritative. It declares that 'dharma and not birth is the cause of the division into varṇas'. The whole world was formerly of one varṇa and the four orders came to be established on account of man's conduct and vocation. It stresses that character is the title to Brahmanhood, and explains that the varṇas represent an organic or spiritual hierarchy. By their conformity to their specific functions and obligations (svadharma), the varṇas, separately and through their integration and co-ordination, serve to maintain the cosmic order (Ṛita or Dharma) and thus realise and re-enact, each in its own stratum, the primordial sacrifice of the Cosmic Person (Puruṣa). This is the norm (Dharma) of society, deviation from which is Adharma, unrighteousness or sin, in the sense of contrariety to both the social and the cosmic order. In addition, 'The Divine Brahman for the benefit of the world and for the protection of dharma indicated four stations of life' (Śāntiparva, 191); i.e., the period of studentship (brahmacharya), marriage and vocation (gṛihastha), retirement and comparative simplification of living (Vānaprastha), and the stage of complete renunciation (Bhikṣu or sanyāsi). The morality common to all is embodied in the following maxim: 'Abstention from injury, truth, and absence of anger produce the merit of penances in all the four stations of life'.

In the Mahābhārata we encounter man with his multi-faceted

nature in his basic raw emotions of arrogance, greed and lust as well as in his full glory and perfection of self-discipline, knowledge and compassion. Ages have passed, many empires, dynasties and peoples have risen and fallen in India, but across the centuries the great epic has been a perennial source of practical wisdom and popular ideals for the Indian peoples, importing into every social crisis or individual misfortune new meanings, values and aspirations. The Mahābhārata is as much alive today as it was during the great snake-sacrifice of Janmejaya, when Veda-Vyāsa's first pupil, Vaiśampāyana, recited the whole story before the assembled sages and warriors in the forest-hermitage of Naimiṣa. India, therefore, still ardently worships its venerable author Vyāsa.

'To Him who is Brahmā, but without four faces;
To Him who is Viṣṇu, but with two hands:
To Him who is Śaṅkara, but without the third eye,
To Vyāsa in the form of Viṣṇu and Viṣṇu in the form of Vyāsa:
To Him, Vasiṣṭha's heir, the self-realised, I bow'.

CHAPTER IV

THE FIRST REFORMATION

ĀJĪVIKISM, JAINISM AND BUDDHISM

The Revolt against Ritualism

THE rituals and sacrifices of Vedic society gradually developed into a highly precise, elaborate and bloody cult that only profited the priests and outraged the conscience of an increasing section of the people. The post-Vedic period saw the rise of several reformist philosophies and cults, especially in the half-Brāhmanised territories of Magadha and Videha. Indeed, the heights of Indian metaphysics and contemplation were reached in the movement against ritualism within the Vedic-Brahmanical fold. The Muṇḍaka, Chhāndogya and Bṛihadāraṇyaka are full of passages that condemn priesthood as false and ceremonialism as deluded. One passage in the Chhāndogya, in bitter satirical vein, describes a procession of greedy dogs shouting 'Om, Om' like the Brāhmanical priesthood, which had indeed become an avaricious, privileged set.

Out of the general intellectual climate of revolt against false ritualism arose the celebrated doctrines of the identity of Self with the universe, or Ātmavidyā, and of Brahman as pure intelligence and bliss, or Madhuvidyā, as expounded by Yājñavalkya. This great seer's uncompromising idealistic monism represents one of the sublime heights in human speculation and has governed, through Bādarāyaṇa and Śaṅkara, the main trend of Indian thought through the ages. Kṛishṇa Devakīputra, the disciple of Ghora Āṅgirasa, in the Chhāndogya obviously also belongs to the same galaxy of reformers who re-interpreted the knowledge of Brahman. We shall refer to Kṛishṇa and Bhāgavatism later.

The Golden Age of Philosophy and Asceticism

The golden age of philosophy was ushered in simultaneously in India, Iran, China, Palestine and Hellas in the fifth, sixth and seventh centuries B.C. The great Hebrew prophets (Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, Micah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel) flourished between 750 and 500 B.C. in Palestine. Zoroaster was born in Media about 660 B.C. The early Upaniṣads were composed in India about 660–550 B.C., the earliest ones being the Aitareya, the Bṛihadāraṇyaka and the Chhāndogya. Buddha (563–487), Mahāvīra (599–527), and Maskarī Gosāla, the leader of the Ājīvika sect, were contemporaries. Confucius taught in China in 551–479 B.C., and Laotzu some time in the fifth century. In Greece Socrates dominated philosophy in 469–399 B.C.

In India, the sixth century was an era of asceticism and renunciation, probably promoted by the blood and iron of early Magadhan imperialism. There was a whole host of mendicant ascetic orders, which flourished from the sixth century onwards. Pāṇini even refers to unmarried śramaṇa nuns (kumārī śramaṇa) obviously of the Buddhist order, apart from the Brāhmanical ascetics (bhikṣus) and the heretical religious mendicants, śramaṇas and parivrājakas. The great grammarian discerned the ferment of thought in his times and classified contemporary speculations (mati) under three heads: (1) theistic (āstika), (2) non-theistic or agnostic (nāstika), and (3) materialistic (daiṣṭika). The Diṣṭa doctrine that repudiates all human volition and effort and cynically depends upon Fate or Niyati is attributed to Maskarī or Makkhalī or Maṅki, who is condemned in the Buddhist texts as the most reprehensible of all sophists. The Buddhist canonical work, the Aṅguttara Nikāya, belonging to the fourth-third centuries B.C., mentions a few of these mendicant orders: the Ājīvika, Nirgrantha (Jain), Muṇḍa-Śāvaka, Jaṭilaka, Parivrājaka, Magaṇḍika, Traidaṇḍika, Aviruddhaka, Gautamaka (Buddhist), and Devadharmika.

The order of the Ājīvikas was founded by Nanda Vachchha. Kisa Saṃkichcha and Makkhali Gosāla became its subsequent heads. Gosāla was a contemporary of Buddha and Mahāvīra and is mentioned as a parivrājaka by Pāṇini, who refers to his followers as Daiṣṭikas. He preached that karma, whether good or evil, leaves no consequences. Man can obtain his release from wickedness not through individual action but through the ceaseless round of births and deaths. Ājīvikism was denounced by both Jainism and Hinduism, which nevertheless assimilated some of its tenets and combated

others. Ājīvikism at one time spread from Saurāṣṭra in the west to Aṅga in the east, and was vigorous enough to obtain the imperial patronage of both Aśoka and Daśaratha, who dedicated caves to the sect. One of Aśoka's western Viceroys went so far as to attempt to convert him, but failed.

The various ascetic and reforming sects and schools like Ājīvikism, Jainism and Buddhism originated largely in the eastern fringes of Brāhmanic culture in the Ganges Valley, where Brāhmanical teaching was corrupt and polytheism, described by Buddha as Deva-dharma, was flourishing. Another characteristic was that they all sprang from the Kṣatriya clans and constituted a protest against the ascendency and arrogance of the Brāhmaṇa, as epitomised by the epithet Bhūsura, or 'god on earth'. It is remarkable that in the Upaniṣads we come across a host of Kṣatriya philosopher kings such as Pravāhaṇa Jaivali, Janaka, Aśvapati Kaikeya, Chitra Gāṅgyāyani and Ajātaśatru, all of whom developed reformist, mystical doctrines; doctrines that embodied, as did those of the famous Yājñavalkya, the transcendental concepts of Ātman and Brahman which were opposed to the older Vedic cult of sacrifice. These doctrines were at first more popular in Kṣatriya circles, but later they were eagerly absorbed by the Brāhmaṇas from the Kṣatriya leaders—an intellectual revolution commented upon in the Bṛihadāraṇyaka. Outside Brāhmaṇa circles the so-called Rāja-vidyā, or wisdom of the seer kings (the rājarṣis of the Bhagavadgītā), grew into prominence. Jainism and Buddhism carried this heritage of Kṣatriya religious catholicism and revolt yet further.

The Multiplicity of Crude and Bizarre Cults

Many cults also emerged, however, that were crude, strange and even bizarre in an age of renunciation, exploration and agnosticism. Their multiplicity and futility struck the Buddha in the following manner. 'Here am I', he reflects in the Lalitavistara, 'born among people who have no prospect of intellectual redemption, crowded by revealers of the truth, with diverse wishes, and at a time when their faculties are wriggling in the grasp of the crocodile of their carnal wants. Stupid men seek to purify their persons by diverse methods of austerity and penance, and inculcate the same. Some of them cannot make out their mantras (scriptural formulas); some lick their hands; some are uncleanly; some have no mantras; some wander after

different sources; some adore cows, deer, horses, hogs, monkeys or elephants. Seated at one place in silence, with their legs bent under them, some attempt greatness. Some attempt to accomplish their penance by inhaling smoke or fire, by gazing at the sun, by performing the five fires, by resting on one foot, or keeping an arm perpetually lifted, or by moving about on their knees'.

Man the Conqueror and Ford-maker in Jainism

Jainism began, typically, as a reform movement in the eastern Ganges Valley, springing from Kṣatriya leaders and obtaining at first largely Kṣatriya converts. Pārśva, who was probably a historical figure, the son of a king of Banārasa, practised and preached a religion of Four Vows that greatly resembled the faith of Mahāvīra. These were: to injure no life, to be truthful, not to steal and to possess no property. He died on Mount Sammeta in Bengal about two and a half centuries before Mahāvīra. Pārśva is one of the twenty-four Tīrthaṅkaras (or ford-makers across the stream of existence) in Jainism.

Mahāvīra Vardhamāna was the son of a wealthy Kṣatriya of Vaiśālī belonging to the Naya or Nāta clan. Hence he was called by the Buddhists Nigaṇṭha (free from fetters) Nātaputta. After his marriage, which gave him a daughter, Aṇojjā or Priyadarśanā, he became a monk at the age of thirty and wandered about naked in winter practising severe austerities. After twelve years of asceticism he attained omniscience under a śāla tree on the bank of the river Ṛijupālikā, near Jṛimbhikagrāma. He then began his career as a Tīrthaṅkara. He preached a new gospel, journeying constantly from town to town, and a considerable number of monks and laymen were converted to his faith, especially in such towns as Champā, Vaiśālī, Rājagṛiha, Mithilā and Śrāvastī.

Man, according to Mahāvīra (the great hero), is ever-becoming (Vardhamāna), ever rising to perfection, until he becomes the Kevalin who soars above the mundane world to Aloka, whence there is no return. There he shines in perfect bliss, knowledge and righteousness for all time. In the Jaina faith the human creature is the Jina, or conqueror, and the ford-maker, or Tīrthaṅkara. His destiny is to free himself from the burden of karma matter that weighs him down. Only by austerity and meditation can he free his soul from the cosmic, automatic law of karma that acts through the properties of matter.

The Jains believe neither in God nor in the divine mercy. Man is the maker of his own freedom or bondage. The whole world, plants, animals and humans, is a plurality of Jīvas, all subject to the cosmic process of karma and rebirth; but all can free themselves through austerity and meditation. The following extracts from the Bhagavatī Viyahapaññatti (Vyākhyā-Prajñapti), which may be parables used by Mahāvīra himself in his discourses, indicate Jain teaching on freedom and bondage.

'As each mesh in a piece of netting, which is set in a row of meshes, without a gap, occupying a regular and co-ordinated position in contact with the other meshes, reacts on the next mesh in regard to heaviness, drag, full weight and closeness, even so in every single soul in many thousand reincarnations, each one of many thousands of forms of life reacts in regard to heaviness, drag, full weight and closeness on the life next to it'.

'Just as if a man should eat food which tastes delicious, well cooked in a saucepan, and containing the desired quantity of each of the eighteen principal ingredients, but nevertheless mixed with poison, and after having consumed it though he is in good health, yet changes. . . . (to a condition which is sad in every respect). . . . even thus, Kālodāi, souls change . . . (to a condition which is bad in every respect) . . . if they take into themselves the hurting of beings, untrue speech, misappropriation, sexual stimulation, possession, anger, pride, deceit and greed, love and hate, strife, slander, gossip and back-biting, dislike and liking, lying and deception, and that thorn, false belief. Thus it comes about, Kālodāi, that souls perform evil deeds, from which evil fruits ripen. But if a man eats delicious food . . . mixed with wholesome substance, and though he is not in good health when he consumes it, but yet changes afterwards . . . (to a condition which is good in every respect) . . . even so, Kālodāi, souls change when they incorporate abstinence from hurting . . . from false belief, that thorn . . . (to a condition which is good in every respect). Thus it comes about Kālodāi, that souls perform good deeds, from which good fruits ripen' (V. 3, VII, 10).

Jainism's moral code for the laity stresses chastity, confession of sin, universal compassion (karuṇā), non-violence (ahiṃsā), and indifference to human wickedness. The new doctrines soon obtained support from such republican peoples as the Lichchhavis and the Mallas, from the Emperors Bimbisāra and Ajātaśatru of Magadha, and the princes of Kāśī, Kośala, Sauvīra, Aṅga, Vatsa and Avanti.

The Common Non-Theistic and Moral Outlook of the Heresies

Jainism, Buddhism, and the teaching of Maskari Gosāla (who lived with Mahāvīra for six years) borrowed a great deal from Sāṅkhya psychology and Yoga philosophy, particularly certain basic archaic modes of thought found outside the pale of Brāhmaṇa orthodoxy and rooted in the Indian soil. All three are saturated with the pessimistic idea that human life is a misery. In Buddhism, for instance, it is observed that if a collection were made of the tears of mankind shed in sorrow since the beginning of the world, it would far exceed in magnitude the waters of all the seas. This is in striking contrast to Vedic Aryan optimism, and the faith in rituals and sacrifices that led man to happiness (Svarga) and salvation. A whole host of fatalistic doctrines and creeds featuring the non-existence of the soul or any final cause, the meaninglessness of karma or reward, and epicureanism were popularised by the Ājīvikas and Nirgrantha sects. Ajita Keśakamblin developed a theory of materialism that was later on taken over by the Lokāyatas, Purāṇa Kassapa elaborated a doctrine of non-causation, the Ahetuvādins advocated a theory of fortuitous origin, while Maskari Gosāla stressed a cynical theory of destiny. Some of these schools challenged both Buddhism and Jainism and introduced a number of schisms for well-nigh two centuries, until Aśoka, who was anxious to preserve the unity of the Buddhist Saṅgha, enjoined his officials to punish Saṅgha-bheda.

A second characteristic of Jainism, Buddhism and the Sāṅkhya Yoga system is that they all put forward a scientific, non-theistic interpretation of the universe. This is grounded in a primitive, animistic notion that all life, whether in plant, animal, man or God, is one, but assumes different appearances or masks in different vehicles, and that the life-monad moves through different levels towards the goal of release, or freedom from birth or rebirth. From this emerges the doctrine of transmigration. This is not encountered at all in the early Brāhmaṇas, but suddenly finds a systematic formulation in the Bṛihadāraṇyaka. Associated with the complementary doctrine of karma it became the sheet anchor of Jainism, Buddhism and the general Indian outlook on life.

Beside their common cosmic and practically atheistic outlook, their interpretation of the universe as comprising an ever-lasting and uncreated dualism of matter and spirit, and their conception of the cycles of karma and rebirth as an endless chain of existences, Jainism and Buddhism both repudiated Vedic lore and the Vedic

pattern of social organisation. While accepting the four-fold stratification of society (Chāturvarṇya), they gave it a metaphysical interpretation, and led a revolt of the Kṣatriyas against both the Brāhmanical priesthood and the whole idea of a superiority derived, not from character and knowledge, but from birth and tradition. The Chhāndogya Upaniṣad has an interesting story on this point. Satyakāma, a strange boy, came to the hermitage of Gautama for initiation into the Supreme Truth. But before he could be accepted as a pupil he had to tell the preceptor his family and clan. So he went back home to ask his mother the name of his father. The mother whispered, 'In my youth, when I was moving about as a maidservant, you came to my womb. I do not know what is your lineage. I am Jabālā by name and you are Satyakāma. You may therefore call yourself Satyakāma-Jābāla'. The boy returned to his preceptor, Gautama, and announced himself exactly as his mother had instructed him. Master Gautama rose from his seat, took the boy in his arms and said, 'A true Brāhmaṇa art thou, my boy. Thou hast the supreme legacy of Truth'.

In addition both Jainism and Buddhism rejected the four stations of life (Āśramas), and glorified only the life of the homeless ascetic. In books XII and XIII of the Mahābhārata, which are largely concerned with the teachings of Bhīṣma, there is a glorification of the ascetic way of life over the Brāhmanical four-fold scheme of varṇa and āśrama that echoes the stress laid on renunciation by the Jains, Buddhists and Ājīvikas. Asceticism or renunciation of the world, self-discipline or self-torture, and ahiṁsā dominated the intellectual climate of the eastern Ganges basin; and yet both Jainism and Buddhism took up the constructive task of disciplining the life of the layman by an elevated moral code. Thus saṁsāra became the initial and preparatory stage for nirvāṇa. Heterodoxy in the east, where language, race and culture were so different from the Madhyadeśa—the stronghold of Vedic culture—had its significant social triumphs. The re-ordering of the varṇa scheme, the linking of the community of monks (Saṅgha) with the laity by disciplinary regulations, and the high moral tone of society, as well as a conception of the dignity and grandeur of the individual, are the permanent gifts of Jainism and Buddhism to Indian civilization.

The Life of Gautama the Tathāgata

Siddhārtha, alias Gautama, or the Buddha Śākyasiṁha, as he was known in the Aśokan inscriptions, or the Tathāgata, as he was described in Pāli literature, is the first historic figure in the dawn of Indian civilization about whose personality we have some details, gained from his sermons and dialogues. He was born in about 563 B.C. at Lumbinī vana on the border of Nepal; he married Yaśodharā, by whom he had a son Rāhula; and he renounced the world in the prime of life. His first teachers were the great Brāhmaṇa ascetics Ālāra Kālāma of Vaiśālī and Udraka Rāmaputra of Rājagṛiha. From the former he obtained initiation into the Sāṅkhya doctrine; but neither Kālāma nor Rāmaputra, a sage of the highest meditation, could satisfy his spiritual inquisitiveness. Gautama then practised such severe austerities that he brought himself to the point of death. Still unsatisfied, he went to Uruvelā, where he meditated under a peepal tree and finally obtained his enlightenment. His first sermon was delivered at Ṛiṣipattana (Sāranāth, near Banārasa). This is described in Pāli literature as 'the Turning of the Wheel of the Law'. The Buddha travelled and preached a great deal, from Kajaṅgala in the east to Verañja, near Mathura, in the west. His habit was to pass Viśas (retreats) during the rains in one or other of the bigger towns, meeting princes and common people, Brahmans and merchants. He lived to the ripe old age of eighty, his ministry having lasted forty-four years.

The Buddha's adherents and converts included Kings Bimbisāra and Ajātaśatru of Magadha, King Prasenajit of Kośala and his queen Mallikā, the rich merchant Anāthapiṇḍika, who presented him with the famous Jetavana, and the celebrated physician Jivaka. Sāriputra and Maudgalyāyana (Moggallāna) were his most prominent disciples; the former was excellent in discourse and was described as the eldest son of the Saṅgha, while the latter was a person of the highest mystical experience. However, the disciple who lived nearest him was Ānanda, whom the Master loved and who often accompanied him on his journeys, taking care of the Master's person and his daily necessities.

The Buddha and Christ

The teachings of the Buddha and Christ have striking resemblances and differences. The Buddha, like Christ, often spoke in parables and

similes in order to press home his message more memorably. Both masters decry the sacrificial system with equal irony and indignation; both are equally strong in their condemnation of the pride of power and pelf; and both stand for purity, moral alertness, compassion and humanitarian service. But here the resemblance ends. In the intellectual climate of India, the Buddha consoles sorrowing man and woman not by the personal and delicate healing touch of Christ, and still less by miracles, but by an appeal to reason, expounding and treating, in the sage's fashion, the desire and suffering of the individual against the background of the suffering and sorrow of the whole universe. To the disconsolate Kisā Gotamī, mourning the loss of her only child, the great teacher says: 'Go and gather mustard seed, but gather it at a house which death has not visited'. The mother finds that death and sorrow are universal. She obtains solace as she thinks to herself: 'How selfish am I in my grief! Death is common to all; yet in this valley of desolation there is a path that leads to immortality one who has surrendered all selfishness'. In their spirit of boundless goodwill, however, Christ and the Buddha resemble each other closely, and Christ's injunction to his followers to turn the other cheek has a vivid counterpart in the Buddha's Parable of the Saw. 'Thus, brethren, though robbers, who are highwaymen, should with a two-handed saw carve you in pieces limb by limb, yet if the mind of any one of you should be offended thereat, such a one is no follower of my gospel'.

Christ had women disciples such as Mary, Martha and Magdalene; and the Buddha, too, had his female adherents, such as Viśākhā, Suppiyā and Ambapāli, whose unstinted charity and munificence were largely responsible for the maintenance of the young order. The Buddha was at first reluctant to admit women into the order but ultimately yielded to the pressure of his foster mother, Mahāprajāpatī. The initial spread of Buddhism was due in no small measure to the religious zeal and benefactions of women. Here is the gift of Viśākhā of Sāvatthi, which the Buddha accepts: 'I desire as long as I live, sire, to give the brotherhood clothes for the rainy season, to give food to stranger monks who arrive here, to give food to monks who are passing through, to give food to sick brethren, to give food to the attendants on the sick, to give medicine to the sick, to distribute a daily dole of cooked rice, to give bathing dresses to the sisterhood of nuns'.

Men and women who accepted the new faith could remain with their families and make themselves useful to the Saṅgha by various

gifts and charities, but many renounced the world to become monks and nuns, 'walking in holiness in order to put an end to all suffering'. In the Buddha's memorable dialogues with King Prasenajit of Kośala, the most powerful ruler of his time, whose kingdom was bounded in the north by the Himālayas, in the west by the Yamunā and in the east by the Gaṇḍaka, we find him advising the king not to renounce the world but to lead a righteous life and work for the welfare of the people.

The Buddha, unlike Christ, had happy and fruitful relations with the representatives of the State. His interviews with kings were never marked either by fear or sycophancy. Yet he lived, travelled and begged like an ordinary śramaṇa, going from door to door in villages and cities and silently waiting until a morsel of food was thrown by the householder into his alms-bowl. He was impatient, and even indignant, at praise from his disciples and would not brook any exhibition of yogic powers. 'It is because I perceive danger in the practice of mystic wonders', he observes, 'that I loathe and abhor and am ashamed thereof'. All kinds of divination, sooth-saying, foretelling or forecasting, he condemns as low arts (Brahmajāla Sutta). Great in humility, he frankly discussed his own faults and blemishes with his disciples. Like Christ he had the practical common sense to appreciate the limitations of human effort and was all forgiveness for the wicked and sinful. He once remarked to his disciples, 'It is lack of understanding and insight into the Four Holy Truths that is to blame, O Brothers, that we—both of you and I—so long have travelled the dreary road of saṁsāra'. A nobler utterance has never fallen from the lips of the founder of a world faith!.

'Be Thou a Lamp unto Thyself'

A serene and vigorous personality, one who reached the highest peak of spiritual contemplation and silence accessible to man, and who yet had an acute sense of realism; the Leader of the Caravan, whom kings, nobles and millionaires came to worship, and who was yet the humblest of all mortals, the Buddha was perhaps the greatest man ever born on earth. The dominant characteristic of his life was alternation between profound silence within the self and compassion for his fellowmen. 'Let me be', observes the Buddha, 'a physician to the sick, a friend to all men, a very sweeper for humility'. Beset by misgivings, it was only after an inner struggle that he decided he

should preach the Doctrine, the Doctrine being too transcendent and difficult for the ordinary man. However, 'On account of pity for beings, I surveyed the world with my Buddha-vision and saw beings of little impurity'; and to these he felt he might fruitfully preach his Doctrine. He compares them to lotuses that are born in the water, but, not being plunged in it, stand out above it. He therefore announced, 'Open to them are the doors of the Immortal'.

In his dying moments Ānanda, his favourite disciple, asked for instructions for the maintenance of the Order. The Buddha replied, 'The Tathāgata thinks not that it is he who should lead the brotherhood, or that the Order is dependent upon him. Why then should he leave instructions in any matter concerning the Order?' Then followed his famous admonition: 'Therefore, O Ānanda, be thou a lamp unto thyself. Be thou a refuge to thyself. Betake thyself to no external refuge. Hold fast to the Truth as a lamp. Hold fast as a refuge to the Truth. Look not for refuge to any one besides thyself'.

The Upaniṣadic Teaching of the Tathāgata

The essentials of Buddhism are formulated in the famous Mṛigadāva sermon. Man should follow the Middle Path by first grasping the four Āryasatyas or noble truths, (1) that worldly existence is full of misery, as manifest in birth, old age, sickness, death, sorrow, lamentation, dejection and despair; (2) that appetite or desire is the cause of world existence; (3) that world existence can be ended by the destruction of appetite; and (4) that there is a Path (Mārga) for the destruction of appetite, based on knowledge of the true nature of all desirable things. This Path is the well-known Eight-fold way and consists of right speech, right action, right means of livelihood, right exertion, right-mindedness, right meditation, right resolution, and finally right viewpoint. The first three lead to physical control (Śīla), the second three to mental control (Chitta), and the last two to wisdom (Prajñā). This is called the Middle Way (Majjhima paṭipadā) because it avoids the two extremes (antas) of self-indulgence and self-mortification.

The new development that the Eightfold way represents lies in the last stage, right viewpoint, i.e., the metaphysical viewpoint of the Tathāgata; who says, 'I lay no wood, Brāhmaṇa, for altar fires; within the self burn the fires I kindle'. This fundamental departure from the older Vedic religion is Upaniṣadic in its essence. Buddhism

is a reformation in the field of faiths, starting as it does from the basic Hindu concepts of the unity of life, the law of karma, and man's inalienable moral responsibility. It conforms to the essential teachings of the major Upaniṣads, and, like them rejects the older Vedic idea of sacrifices as futile. The Tathāgata adopts the maxims of the Upaniṣadic riṣis and the Yoga practices of the age, though in his teaching to the common people he stresses moral discipline and charity rather than intellectual vigour.

The Majjhima-Nikāya's claim that the Buddha 'has no metaphysical theories' is obviously justified in view of the excessive refinements and sophistries of many of the contemporary sects. Compared with these the Buddhist gospel is a standing invitation to a Way of Living (Ehipasiko, or the doctrine of 'Come, Examine and Accept'). However, although in the early history of Buddhism the stress was mainly on the moral adventure of the individual, grounded in the impermanence of the world, in its struggle with the various contemporary sects and schools, orthodox and heterodox, it soon developed an appropriate philosophy and metaphysics.

The Buddhist and Upaniṣadic Nirvāṇa

In the early metaphysical formulations it is remarkable how closely the Buddha's definition of Nirvāṇa resembles that of Brahman-identity in the Upaniṣads. 'In this sphere there is neither earth nor water, light nor air, neither this world nor that world, both sun and moon, neither infinity of space nor infinity of consciousness, nor nothingness'. This is almost identical with profound passages in the Upaniṣads. In addition the Buddha asserts that the topmost knowledge is also Loveliness and Beauty. Nirvāṇa abides in the Beautiful. It is also the highest bliss, as health is the highest gain (Majjhima Nikāya). It is not subject to decay, disease or death (amṛita); it is free from grief and impurity. It is the incomparable (anuttara) and the highest goal (yogakkhema), according to the Ariyapariyesanasutta.

Yet there is a distinction between the Buddhist Nirvāṇa and the Brahma Nirvāṇa of the Upaniṣads. This is developed in the Majjhima Nikāya. The Buddhist Nirvāṇa, though characterised, as is the Brahma Nirvāṇa, by negative phrases (neti neti), reveals Reality as Becoming, a dynamic process (paṭichcha-samuppāda), instead of the static unity of some Upaniṣadic seers. But only silence can do justice to this state of super-consciousness (abhi-

saṁbodhi). Even here we find an echo of Yājñavalkya, who, in his celebrated discourse to King Janaka, stressed that man's realisation of identity with the Brahman, or the highest, is a progressive process, symbolised as 'the ancient, long-stretched-out and subtle Path' (panthā, mārga, or yāna to ātma-loka, Bṛihadāraṇyaka, IV, 4, 8). The Buddha appropriately calls himself an explorer and rediscoverer of 'an ancient Path, trodden by Buddhas of a bygone age; having followed it, I understand life, and its coming to be and its passing away'.

Brahman and Karma in Buddhism

A striking difference between the Vedanta and Buddhism, however, springs from the Tathāgata's moral fervour, which leads him to an original, profound and dynamic interpretation of the ancient concepts of Brahman and Karma. He interprets the Upaniṣadic unity of the Brahman as the collectivity of all sentient creatures (Khuddaka-nikāya), united by the bond of life; and this prompts the Buddhist emphasis on the active virtue of altruism (brahmavihāra).

He also rejects, on the basis of the non-existence of a permanent self (anatta), the ancient Hindu doctrine of karma, in which personal rewards and punishments are meted out from birth to birth. He stresses that the consequences of karma are borne from generation to generation in the entire world collectively, or finally by the eternal or universal Buddha. This last tenet, wherein karma is re-installed as a tremendous impersonal and cumulative moral force of the collectivity, wherein the evil thought, word or deed of a single individual is calculated to disrupt the entire fabric of society, just as his good thought, word or deed relieves and uplifts generations of suffering mankind, is the Tathāgata's reaction to the pernicious nihilism of some of the extreme contemporary heresies. Buddhism's stress on earnest and diligent striving for the holy life (brahma-charya), on self-transcending love and charity, demolishing the boundaries of the transient ego, is its supreme challenge to the arid intellectualism, scepticism, and individualism of the age.

The Spread of Buddhism

The purity, austerity and insight of the Buddhist monks, or Arhats, who shave their heads and beards, wear the coarse, patch-

work cast-off saffron robes, and go forth 'from the home to the homeless life', has been largely responsible for the spread of the doctrine. The following description of an Arhat is from the Dīgha-Nikāya (iii, 133).

'Thus, Chuṇḍa, should you reply, concerning the Arhat, to those of other views:

"Friend, a brother who is an Arhat, one in whom the āsavas are destroyed, who has lived the life, who has done his task, who has laid down the burden, who has reached his own welfare, who has utterly destroyed the bond that binds to becoming, who is released by the knowledge,—such a one is incapable of behaving in nine ways, to wit:

Of intentionally taking the life of a creature;
Of taking by way of theft what is not given;
Of practising the sexual act;
Of telling a deliberate lie;
Of indulging in intoxicants;
Of storing up (food) for the indulgence of appetite, as he used to do when he was a householder;
Of going on the wrong path through hatred;
Of going on the wrong path through delusion;
Of going on the wrong path through fear".'

The Influence of Pāṇini

Though he played no direct part in the Reformation, Pāṇini's work greatly assisted the spread of its ideas. His is one of the greatest names in world literature. His celebrated Sanskrit grammar, the Aṣṭādhyāyī, written probably in the fifth or fourth century B.C., established the form and structure of classical Sanskrit. This work, according to Macdonell, 'describes the entire Sanskrit language in all the details of its structure with a completeness which has never been equalled elsewhere. It is at once the shortest and the fullest grammar in the world'.

Ṛiṣi Pāṇini, as he was called, was according to tradition, invited to the Court of Nanda, Emperor at Pāṭaliputra, where his work received Imperial recognition and approval. The Emperor prized his grammar and issued an edict that it should be taught and studied throughout the kingdom—a story that is mentioned by Hiuen-

Tsang and Rājaśekhara (A.D. 900). The latter specifically mentions Pāṭaliputra and the śāstrakāra parīkṣā there.

Assimilating, as well as departing a good deal from, the Vedic words and derivatives, and striking a careful balance in respect of their manifold vṛittis or meanings, Pāṇini set the form of the Bhāṣā, the living speech of his times. The Bhāṣā is contrasted in Pāṇini lore with Chhandasī or mantra, specifically denoting Vedic literature. Pāṇini's range of learning and information was encyclopaedic, and his Sūtras remain a rich treasure-house of social and linguistic information not yet adequately utilised. Coming from Śālātura (near the confluence of the rivers Kabul and Indus in the north-west), he showed much familiarity with the kingdoms of Gandhāra and Vāhlīka, the cities and forts of the Uttarāpatha, and Greek writing (Yavanānī lipi).

There have been many famous commentaries on Pāṇini, the most important being the Vārttikas of Kātayāyana, who lived in about the third century B.C., and the Mahābhāṣya of Patañjali, who flourished about 150 B.C. Below is an extract relating to Pāṇini from the history of Buddhism in India by Tāranāth, a Tibetan monk-author who lived in about A.D. 1500. His real name was Kun-snjing. The Chāndra-vyākaraṇa, composed between A.D. 465 and 544, was based on Pāṇini and at one time had much currency in Tibet, Nepal, Kashmir and Ceylon.

'Pāṇini composed the grammatical Sūtras called the Pāṇini vyākaraṇa, consisting of 2000 ślokas, namely 1000 ślokas on the formation of words, and 1000 of explanation. This is, moreover, the root of all grammars. Before him there were no Śāstras on the formation of words set down in writing, and as no system existed which brought the subject under distinct points of view, individual grammarians who brought special facts of language into connections of two and two were esteemed as remarkably learned. Though it is said in Tibet that the Indra-vyākaraṇa is older, yet as we shall show below, though it may have penetrated earlier into the Celestial country, in India Pāṇini's grammar was the earliest. And though Pandits assert that the Chāndravyākarana, translated into Tibetan, agrees with Pāṇini and the Kalāpa-vyākaraṇa with the Indra-vyākaraṇa, it is universally maintained that Pāṇini's grammar, in the copiousness of its explanations and yet the systematic completeness of its views, is something quite unique'.

CHAPTER V

THE SECULARISM AND UNIVERSALISM OF THE MAURYA RENAISSANCE

Social Factors underlying Magadhan Imperialism

BEFORE the time of the Buddha there were sixteen great states (Mahājanapadas) in Northern India. The major ones were Magadha, Kośala, and Vatsa, and the minor ones, Kuru, Pāñchāla, Śūrasena, Kāśī, Mithilā, Aṅga, Kaliṅga, Aśmaka, Gandhāra, and Kamboja. The rise of asceticism in Eastern India and the spell which Jainism and Buddhism cast over the population were synchronous with the suffering, displacement and migration of large groups of Brāhmaṇa and Kṣatriya peoples in the course of the sanguinary struggles of Magadha, Aṅga, Kāśī, Kośala and the republican states. Bimbisāra (544–493 B.C.), through the conquest of Aṅga and the peaceful acquisition of Kāśī, greatly enlarged the kingdom of Magadha; while his son Ajātaśatru (493–462 B.C.) consolidated Magadhan supremacy over the whole of Northern and Eastern India with two fortified capitals, Rājagṛiha and Pāṭaliputra. Ajātaśatru was a contemporary of Mahāvīra and the Buddha. He is said to have openly accepted Mahāvīra as his teacher, as the one who revealed the true path of religion, based on renunciation and non-violence; he is also depicted in a Bhārhut sculpture (of about the second century B.C.) as visiting the Buddha. The sculpture bears the inscription 'Ajātaśatru salutes the Lord'. This cruel warrior, who killed his father and stabilised the Magadhan Empire through both might and cunning, thus came to accept the path of non-violence; he enshrined the relics of the Buddha in a stūpa at Rājagṛiha and provided all facilities for the convention of the first general Buddhist Council, or Saṅgīti, after the Buddha's death.

About a century separates the Nanda dynasty (364–324 B.C.) from Ajātaśatru (about 493 to 462 B.C.). Nanda was a Śūdra, the son or slave of a barber. His rise to power is a measure of the complete

reversal of the ancient Vedic scheme of life, culture and polity. The Brāhmaṇas in large numbers gave up their ancient occupation of teaching in their forest retreats and took to all sorts of occupations—commerce, trade and agriculture. According to the Jātakas they sometimes acquired considerable wealth and prestige (mahāśāla Brāhmaṇa), 'lived with the wealth and pomp of kings', and ruthlessly exploited the slaves (dāsas) and farm hands (bhṛitakas). The Kṣatriya varṇa also abandoned their ancient calling as warriors, counsellors and officers of state and became founders of reformist religious faiths that undermined Vedic religion. Finally, the Śūdras in their turn rose from their servile occupations and founded a big empire in Eastern India, after conquering and destroying all the Kṣatriya kingdoms of the time. It was the liberalism and humanism of Jainism and Buddhism, whose influence went far beyond the spheres of religion and philosophy, that contributed to the disruption of the Vedic social pattern and ushered in a casteless society and the mighty empire of Mahāpadma Nanda, of 'unknown lineage' (ajñāta-kula). Mahāpadma denotes 100,000 million gold pieces. The fabulous wealth of Emperor Nanda, referred to centuries later by Hiuen Tsang and in the Kathā-sarit-sāgara, enabled him to build up a huge army, which brought 'the whole earth under the umbrella of his authority' (eka-chhatra), according to the Purāṇas, which deprecate his disreputable origin.

Geographical and social factors were favourable to the development of a large empire in the eastern Gangetic basin under the aegis of the Magadhan monarchs, Bimbisāra, Ajātaśatru and the Nandas. The expansive valley was populous, wealthy and prosperous. The intermingling of peoples and castes and the loosening of social restrictions due to the spread of Jainism and Buddhism enlarged the political consciousness of the people. The marked trend towards secularism, the acquisition of considerable wealth by the Vaiśyas, the rise of such big cities as Banārasa, Rājagṛiha, Śrāvastī, Sāketa, and Kauśāmbī, with their multi-millionaire industrial jeṭṭhakas and trading seṭṭhis, and the integration of military and economic guilds, which took care of the profession of arms and the production of weapons, all helped to make Magadha the seat and focus of the earliest and largest Indian Empire. Rājagṛiha, completely enclosed by its seven hills, and Pāṭaliputra, on the confluence of the Ganges and the Son, were strategic sites for both defence and offence. Magadhan imperialism was at once the gift of the Ganges valley and of the religious reformation, of secularism and the accumulation of riches in the east.

The Impact of Foreign Invasions

But Magadhan empire-building also received its impetus from two foreign invasions in north-western India—the invasion of Gandhāra and Sindhu by the Achaemenian Emperor Darius and the conquest of the Punjab by Alexander of Macedon. Cyrus conquered Kapiśa and Gandhāra, and Darius (522–486 B.C.) included the trans-Indus region called the Hidu, Hindu or Sindhu within the Achaemenian Empire. The name India, derived from Hindu, which became the twentieth and the richest province of the Achaemenian Empire, was thus given to our country by a foreign conqueror. Alexander, after defeating Darius III in 330 B.C., raided India in order to complete his conquest of the Achaemenian Empire by subjugating its eastern province. He met with stiff and heroic resistance, which provoked him to massacre the population; he crossed the Sindhu near Taxila and defeated Poros in a big battle. He then reached the river Beas, where his progress was brought to a halt by the mutiny of his troops, who refused to march further. Alexander was thus denied a trial of strength with the mighty Nanda Empire in the East. The Macedonian invader left behind seven satraps in the north-west, with strong Macedonian garrisons; but soon there were rebellions and assassinations, while Alexander himself died in Babylon in 323 B.C. His sudden death speeded up the collapse of his empire.

A new hero now emerged on the scene in India: Chandragupta. Helped by his Brāhmaṇa adviser Kauṭilya, he overthrew the foreign army of occupation and obtained mastery over the warrior tribes of the Punjab and Sind, whose unconquerable spirit of resistance he utilised for a war of independence. Justin observes, 'India, after the death of Alexander, shook off the yoke of servitude and put his governors to death. The author of this liberation was Sandrocottos' (Chandragupta). After this Chandragupta, whose army comprised Śakas, Yavanas (Greeks), Kirātas, Kambojas, Pārasikas, and Bāhlikas, turned to the east and vanquished the Nanda king, the unrighteous Śūdra ruler of India.

The World's First Secular Welfare State

Thus was established the most extensive empire in Indian history, spreading from the borders of Iran to Śravaṇa Belgola in Mysore, and from Kathiawar to the borders of Kāmarūpa. Brāhmanical in

its ideals and pattern, effectively centralised, and yet broad-minded and tolerant, it promoted the supremacy of Dharma in internal as well as external relations. The Mauryan Empire under Chandragupta and Aśoka was not only the strongest and largest ever founded in the country, including as it did the strategic north-western territories of Aria, Arachosia, Paropanisadae and Gedrosia (i.e. Herat, Kandahār, Kabul and Baluchistan), but it was also the world's first secular welfare state, rooted in the toleration of all faiths, the sanctity of all life, and the promotion of amity and peace for all humanity.

The idea of the state as guardian of the moral life and happiness of the people arose with Chandragupta, the architect of the Mauryan Empire. The symbol and embodiment of this new imperial policy was the Arthaśāstra of Kauṭilya, the core of which is generally recognised to belong to the fourth century B.C. It is the oldest treatise on the science of polity, and its standing in the Indian world may be indicated by giving the opinion of Kāmandaka, the author of the Kāmandakīya Nītisāra, which is assigned to the fourth century A.D. Kāmandaka states that Kauṭilya (alias Chāṇakya or Viṣṇugupta) single-handed by his statesmanship brought about the fall of the powerful Nanda, bestowed the earth on King Chandragupta, and distilled from the ocean of Arthaśāstra (political science) the quintessence, his own work on polity. According to Kauṭilya, the authority of the state is to be utilised for keeping the four castes and four stages of religious life to their respective parts, ever devotedly adhering to their specific duties and occupations. In the Arthaśāstra we read: 'The happiness of his subjects is the happiness of the king; their welfare (hitaṃ) is his. The king's welfare lies not in his own pleasure but in that of his subjects'.

This idea is echoed in Aśoka's sixth Rock Edict and it was indeed Aśoka, with his humanitarian missions, ordinances and institutions for the preaching of a universal Dharma, and his eschewal of force as an instrument of governance, who really ushered in the Mauryan welfare state. Aśoka enlarged his empire by the annexation of Kaliṅga, and moralised and elevated it by formulating and implementing the principle of Dharma-vijaya, or conquest through Dharma. In his thirteenth Rock Edict, inscribed outside Kaliṅga, where other edicts are also to be found, he refers to his remorse after the conquest of Kaliṅga, at which 'one hundred and fifty thousand in number were those carried off from there, a hundred thousand in number were those who were slain there, and many times as many those who were dead'. He then proceeds to make it clear that he

holds Dharma-vijaya to be the principal conquest, and the Edict ends: 'Even those to whom the envoys of His Sacred Majesty do not go, having heard of His Sacred Majesty's practice, ordinances, and injunctions of Dharma, themselves follow, and will follow, the Dharma. The conquest that is won by this everywhere, that conquest, again, is everywhere productive of a feeling of love. Love is won in moral conquests. That love may be, indeed, slight, but His Sacred Majesty considers it productive of great fruit, indeed, in the world beyond'.

The Mauryan Conception of an Ārya Nation

The Mauryan Empire for the first time in Indian history gave a political connotation to the status of the 'Ārya'; it was no longer restricted by the sacramental incidence of the Dvija, but embraced all the free citizens of an entire continent. 'All Indians are free and not one of them is a slave', observes Arrian. In the Arthaśāstra we come across the expression 'Āryabhāva', or Āryatva which in some measure corresponds to the Roman notion of common culture and rights of citizenship. 'It is no crime for the Mlechchhas to sell or mortgage the life of their own offspring. But never shall an Ārya be subjected to slavery'. The sale or mortgage of a Śūdra who is not a born slave, but is an Ārya by birth is punishable by fine, amercement and even death. The Ārya is a free-born citizen of the Mauryan empire and no one can deprive him of his privileges. No Śūdra can be enslaved, for he also 'breathes the breath of the Ārya', (Ārya-prāṇa). On paying the amount of money for which he is enslaved, a slave shall regain his Āryabhāva. The acquisition of the status of an Ārya or Adāsa (freeman) through payment of ransom or heredity is called 'Āryakṛita' by Kauṭilya. The same term Āryakṛita appears also in Pāṇini's Sūtra (iv. 1. 30), having a specific denotation, viz., the free citizenship of the Ārya. The son of an Ārya can never be a slave. 'The offspring of a man who has sold himself off as a slave shall be an Ārya'; thus did the imperial decree abolish the ancient custom of hereditary slavery. A slave woman taken as wife by an Ārya acquires freedom along with her children. A slave is not only entitled to the inheritance of his father, but can also purchase his freedom through the earnings he is permitted to make over and above those in his master's service. The kinsmen of a slave can, and should, free him from bondage by payment of ransom. In the Jātakas, too, we read

that slavery could be ended by payment (Jātaka, 17, 547), or by the will of the slave's master.

The manumission of slaves and the stress on the privileges of the Ārya, encroachment upon which is punishable, represent a systematic attempt on the part of a secular state to abolish slavery, virtually for all, and to ground the incidence of Āryahood on culture rather than on class and birth. It was no doubt the earliest great movement of emancipation among the slaves, serfs, dāsas, karmakāras and bhṛitakas—the landless class recruited from the sturdy peasant farmers, who probably became very numerous and toiled as hirelings on the estates of royal capitalists. It was a sign of social decadence, as the Jātakas testify (I, 339), and of the equality of all classes, Kṣatriyas, Brāhmaṇas, Vaiśyas, and Śūdras (all of whom are Āryas by birth), before the law.

The Development of Secularism and Toleration

As against the Ājīvika, Jain, and Buddhist emphasis on asceticism and renunciation of home and social obligations, which were eating up the vitals of society, Kauṭilya's Arthaśāstra reinterpreted the Varṇāśrama Dharma on the basis of the ancient metaphysical principle of an organic or spiritual hierarchy of persons and groups, and discouraged premature renunciation without the formal sanction of legal authorities and adequate provision for the family. 'If a person adopts the ascetic life without making provision for his wife and sons he is punishable with amercement, likewise any person who converts a woman to asceticism'. This was a natural concomitant of Mauryan empire-building; for no strong empire could be either built or maintained where the bulk of the intelligentsia chose the homeless life.

Another source of the Empire's strength was its broad-minded toleration of the manners, customs and laws not only of the aboriginal and forest peoples (āṭavīkas), but also of the conquered peoples and foreign residents. The Arthaśāstra especially recommends that the king should even adopt the manners, language and dress of the conquered, and respect their gods, social institutions and festivals. Every community, caste, corporation and village was left in complete freedom to pursue its own culture and mode of living peacefully, according to the universal code of Dharma. These trends were no doubt in consonance with the heterogeneous social composition of a

vast empire, with the Pārasīkas, Yavanas and other foreigners inhabiting the north-west, and the zeal of a people in a cosmopolitan age to take their due share in the expanding vocations, trade and commerce of the country, irrespective of birth and caste regulations.

Toleration of all religious sects, so that all could flourish equally and develop sound doctrines, was enjoined by Aśoka, who devoted his twelfth Rock Edict to the subject. Aśoka held that 'the root of it is restraint of speech, that is, there should not be honour of one's own sect and condemnation of others' sects without any ground. Such slighting should be for specified grounds only. On the other hand, the sects of others should be honoured for this ground or that. Thus doing, one helps one's own sect to grow, and benefits the sects of others, too. Doing otherwise, one hurts one's own sect and injures the sects of others. . . . Hence concord alone is commendable, in this sense, that all should listen, and be willing to listen, to the doctrines professed by others. This is, in fact, the desire of His Sacred Majesty. . . .'

Social Stratification in the Mauryan Age

In the Mauryan period no caste formation is discernible in the upper levels of the social order. The common duties of the three higher castes, Brāhmaṇa, Kṣatriya and Vaiśya, were study (Adhyayana), worship (Yajña), and charity (Dāna); and there was also an intermingling of their occupations. One of the Jātakas mentions as many as ten unworthy callings that the Brāhmaṇas were pursuing against rules; these include cultivation, small trade, earth-digging, menial service and even hunting. Similarly, the Kṣatriyas also became cultivators and artisans, while the Vaiśyas, too, worked as artisans. Such was the progress of secularisation in the Mauryan age that this mobility of occupations did not denote loss of social status and prestige. It is in the lowest levels, among the five hina-jātis, or low castes and tribes, that in the fifth century B.C. we find the beginning of the fateful transformation of both ethnic and functional groups into closed castes or jātis, the process that ultimately spread to all parts of the social structure. The hina-jātis are mentioned as five in the Vinaya Sutta-vibhaṅga, viz., Chāṇḍāla, Vena, Niṣāda, Rathakāra and Pukkusa. The Dīgha Nikāya applies the designation Millakka (Mlechchha) to groups outside the pale of Aryan society. These would be called nirvasita in contrast to the

anirvasita Śūdras admitted to Aryan society, as mentioned by Pāṇini (II, 4, 10). Even the taboos that forbade the use of household utensils by certain Śūdra groups came into vogue, as is discerned by the grammarian (II, 4, 10, 1, 475). Āpastamba refers to the Niṣāda, Chāṇḍāla, Paulkasa and Vaina as the lowest castes (ii, 1, 2, 6). Finally, in the Mauryan period miscegenation was not uncommon and led to the rise of certain mixed castes (antarāla). The offspring of pratiloma marriages were especially looked down upon; such were the Āyogava, Kṣattra and Chāṇḍāla (of Śūdra fathers), Māgadha and Vaidehika (of Vaiśya fathers), and Sūta (of Kṣatriya fathers.) Such mixed castes as the Ambaṣṭha or Āmbaṣṭha are mentioned by Paṇini. The Mauryan age was one of racial admixture and assimilation, when social strata and occupations neither crystallised nor coincided and the highest status was enjoyed by the Kṣatriya varṇa on the one hand, or on the other, those Brāhmaṇas who served as the king's priests, and as ministers and ambassadors, or who lived as hermits in the forests (Megasthenes' hylobioi).

Kauṭilya's Social Laws

Within the limits imposed by the need to protect and maintain Dharma, or the ordering of the four major functional groups of society, 'according to the custom of the Āryas', Kauṭilya's Arthaśāstra envisages the control of all professions, occupations and jobs, together with standards of labour and craftsmanship. Some of his regulations contain the rudiments of the modern idea of social security in a planned economy. Agricultural and other workers (karmakāras) were secured their proper wages, governed by agreements between them and their employers, which would also be communicated to their neighbours. Non-payment of such wages was an offence punishable by fine. The bhṛitakas were also entitled to their regular wages (vetana), and to some benefits if they were ill or disabled, or employed in disagreeable jobs, or were in distress. Aśoka's repeated injunction concerning the protection of slaves and workers (dāsa-bhṛitaka) in several of his Edicts has to be understood in the light of the above regulation of Kauṭilya (III, 13, 14).

In the Arthaśāstra it is also enjoined that the king shall provide the orphans (bāla), the aged, the infirm, the afflicted, and the helpless with maintenance. He shall also provide subsistence to helpless women when they are carrying, and also to the children they give

birth to. The aged and afflicted, and pregnant women and children shall be given free crossing of rivers. The king shall regard with fatherly kindness those who have passed the period of remission of taxes.

With regard to marriage, where Manu prohibits the remarriage of widows Kauṭilya allows it. A widow shall be given on the occasion of her remarriage whatever either her father-in-law or husband, or both, had given to her. But this she will forfeit if she marries any person other than of her father-in-law's choice.

Wives whose husbands have not been heard of for a year or more, according to circumstances, may remarry.

Kauṭilya allows a wife to abandon her husband if he is of bad character, or is long gone abroad, or has become a traitor to his king, or is likely to endanger her life, or has become an outcast or impotent.

Kauṭilya, unlike any other known law-giver, permits divorce. His ruling is that a marriage in the approved form cannot be dissolved except on the ground of mental hatred.

If a man, apprehending danger from his wife, desires divorce, he shall return to her whatever she was given (on the occasion of her marriage). If a woman, under the apprehension of danger from her husband, desires divorce, she shall forfeit her claim to her property. Marriages contracted in accordance with the customs of the first four kinds of marriage cannot be dissolved.

The Equality of all Āryas before the Law

The consolidation of a mighty empire demanded the superiority of the secular authority to sacred law: in the Mauryan Empire the writ of the king was superior to the scripture. In this the Arthaśāstra departs in a most significant and even revolutionary manner from the current Dharmaśāstras. Kauṭilya asserts: 'Dharma (sacred law), Vyavahāra (contract), Charitra (custom), and Rājaśāsana (royal decree) are the four legs of law, each of which is of superior validity to the one previously named'. 'Whenever sacred law (Śāstra) is in conflict with rational law (Dharmanyāya), then reason shall be held authoritative'. The fourth century B.C. in India, besides being an epoch of foreign invasions, diplomacy and war, also saw an expansion of trade with Persia and the Hellenistic world. The process of secularisation that had been going on, which was so characteristic of the power politics of Kauṭilya's Arthaśāstra, must have been powerfully influenced, therefore, by contact with the Persian Empire and

the Hellenistic kingdoms, where the authority of the monarch largely governed the domain of civil law.

The secularisation of the Mauryan state is further stressed in the Arthaśāstra by the withdrawal of the Brāhmaṇa's ancient immunity from criminal penalty and capital punishment. According to Kauṭilya a Brāhmaṇa guilty of high treason is liable to the death penalty by drowning. The Mauryan Empire sought to establish the equality of all free citizens or Āryas before the law, irrespective of caste or birth. This principle was underlined by Aśoka in his edicts, which insist that all his officers rigidly conform to the principles of Daṇḍa-samatā (equality of punishment) and Vyavahāra-samatā (equality in law suits). The Empire was administered under Mahāmātras and Rājukas, supervised by itinerant judges. The Rājukas (or Lajukas), who were chiefly concerned with the welfare and happiness of the country people (janapadasya hitasukhāya), were particularly enjoined to be absolutely impartial in their rewards and punishments. In spite of centralisation, however, the administration of justice rested on a large number of self-governing courts and tribunals run by villages, cities, guilds and professions. Kauṭilya lays down that each important city and locality shall have a court of justice consisting of three members acquainted with sacred law (dharmastha) and three ministers of the king. The centralised structure of the Mauryan welfare state was thus built on more ancient, democratic, foundations.

Rural Autonomy and Collective Enterprise

The peace and security of the realm under Mauryan Imperialism promoted the welfare of the common people, together with a large variety of collective enterprises, social, economic and educational in the villages. Village autonomy was maintained. The administration was based on the grāma, as the smallest unit, under an officer called grāmaṇī, also called the grāmika and grāmabhojaka, and on groups of 10, 20, 100 and 1,000 villages under officers called, respectively Daśī, Viṁśī, Śateśa and Sahasreśa, in ascending order of authority, culminating in Sthānikas, Rājukas and Prādeśikas charged with the welfare of Janapadas, or country parts, and Pradeśas, or districts. At the village level there was a whole host of welfare activities that elicited the enthusiasm and labour of the common people. The villagers, we read in the Kulāvaka Jātaka, 'stood in the middle of the

village transacting its business . . . they improved its highways and roads, built causeways, dug water tanks, built a hall; they showed charity and kept the commandments'. The public hall (Śālā or Santhāgāra) of the village is the focus of all its activities. According to the Mahāummagga Jātaka, each village has its public hall, its sports ground (Kīlā maṇḍalaṃ), a court of justice (vinichchayaṃ), an assembly for religious discourse (dharmasabhāṃ) beautiful pictures, a tank with 1,000 bends in the bank and 100 bathing ghāts, and an alms house (dānabhattaṃ), together with special apartments for strangers, monks, Brāhmaṇas, foreign merchants and destitute persons. Some references in the Arthaśāstra and the Jātakas suggest collective farming, not to speak of the collective management of irrigation, pasturage, grazing, education, recreations, charities and scarifices. The Arthaśāstra rules that whoever stays away from any kind of co-operative venture (sambhūya setubandhāt) shall send his servants and bullocks to carry on his work, shall have a share in the expenditure, but shall have no claim to the profit.

Sea-borne Trade and Sea-ports

The extension of the Mauryan Empire beyond the Hindukush to Bactriana led to a phenomenal expansion of Indian and foreign trade, especially as the Mauryan empire inherited the elaborate highway system of the Achaemenids, which connected the valleys of the Sindhu and the Punjab with Persepolis and Susa. The Western trade brought immense quantities of gold to India, as is evident from the luxury and munificence of the seṭṭhis of the chief cities of Northern India, whose wealth is reckoned at the conventional figure of eighty crores. The multi-millionaire Mahāseṭṭhi Anāthapiṇḍika of Śrāvasti, attended by 500 seṭṭhis, bought the Jetavana park for the Buddha by covering its whole surface with gold coins. A foreign testimony to the wealth of India is supplied by Herodotus, who pointed out that the Indian territory of the empire of Darius paid a tribute exceeding that of every other people: three hundred and sixty talents of gold-dust. The Greek historian also mentions that India obtained a small part of her supply of gold from mines; and both he and Megasthenes observe that some of it came from the river-beds. The river Son was called Erannoboas or Hiraṇyavahā, i.e., gold-carrier. Taprobane, or Ceylon, in the Mauryan period produced even more gold and large pearls than India herself, as is recorded by

Megasthenes. Kauṭilya refers to a pearl called Tāmraparṇika, produced in 'Tāmraparṇī'.

The trading voyages of Indian merchants and sailors extended in the Mauryan age from Baveru, or Babylon, in the West to Taprobane, or Ceylon, in the south, and to Suvarṇabhūmi, or Sumatra and the other islands of the East. Long sea-voyages were made possible through the use of shore-sighting crows (diśā-kāka). The Jātakas refer to ocean voyages lasting six months, made in ships (Nāva) that were drawn up on shore in the winter. When a ship arrived at a port a hundred competing merchants would be waiting to buy up its cargo. The ships were large enough to carry 500 to 700 passengers across the seven seas. For the first time India developed a strong naval force (Nausenā), which guarded the vast coastal regions of India and gave adequate protection to the merchantmen on the high seas against piracy and attack, especially on vessels bringing pearls and jewels from the Tamil states and Ceylon to Northern India. For the proper supervision and control of the navy there was actually a Board of Admiralty at Pāṭaliputra, as is mentioned by Megasthenes. Ships 'full-rigged for distant seas' and carrying 'hundreds of passengers and traders' coasted round India for distant Bhārukachchha (Broach) and Suvarṇabhūmi (Sumatra, or the East Indies in general), touching Taprobane (Ceylon) on the way. In a well-known passage the Milindapañho (of about the first century B.C.) describes how a ship-owner carries on his business; how he becomes wealthy by constantly handling freights in some seaport town, and how he embarks on the high seas and sails to Vaṅga (Bengal), Takkola (Malaya), China (China), Sovīra (Gujarat), Suraṭṭha (Kathiawar), Alasanda (Alexandria), Kolapaṭṭana (Coromandal Coast), and Suvarṇabhūmi (Sumatra), or 'any other place where ships do congregate'. The great ports of the Mauryan Empire were Barbaricum at the mouth of the Indus, Bhārukachchha (in the kingdom of Bhāru) on the Narbadā, Śūrpāraka, Roruva or Roruka (the capital of Sovīra), and Karambia in the West, and Tāmralipti in Vaṅga, from which traders set sail for the East Indies and Ceylon, and engaged in the Indian coastal trade.

The Ancient Trade-routes and Marts

All these ports were reached by magnificent inland road systems: from Pāṭaliputra through Banārasa, Sāketa, Kauśāmbī, Bhārhut, Vidiśā and Ujjayinī, crossing the great forest-belt of Middle India

(Kātyāyana's Kāntārapatha), to Pratiṣṭhāna and Bhārukachchha; or, again, from Pāṭaliputra via Champā, on the Ganges, down the river to Tāmralipti (modern Tamluk); or from Śrāvastī, Kapilavastu, Pāvā, Vaiśāli and Nālandā to Rājagriha and Bodh Gayā by land to the same port; and from Tāmralipti through Bodh Gayā, Banārasa, Prayāga, Kauśāmbī, Mathurā, Hastināpura, Śākala, Taxila, Puṣkalāvatī and Masakavati to Kāpiśī and Bālhīka (Balkh), whence Indian goods were carried down the Oxus to Europe, across the Caspian and then along the Kur and Phasis to the Black Sea ports, or through Herat and the Caspian Gates to Antioch by way of Ctesiphon and Hecatompylos. There was also a difficult route from Śrāvastī through Kāmpilya and Mathurā and across the deserts of Rajputana to Sauvīra and Bārbara, or Potana (Patala), founded by Alexander on the Indus, whence Indian merchandise was carried by the ancient land route to Iran and the Greek cities of Asia Minor. Pāṇini refers to Mādra-Vāṇijya, Kāśmīra-Vāṇijya and Gāndhāra-Vāṇijya, indicating the importance of trade with these distant regions. Prakaṇva (Greek Parikanioi, or Ferghana) and Kuchavara, or Kucha, are also mentioned by the great grammarian. The high road from Pāṭaliputra to Balhīka, which he calls the Uttarāpatha, was free from dangers and much frequented; the important cities mentioned include Sankiśa, Hastināpura, Saṅgala, Suvāstu, Varṇu and Varaṇā. One of the Jātakas mentions students travelling in large numbers to Taxila, unattended and unarmed. Rest houses (āvasathāgāra) and wells on the high roads are mentioned in the Aśokan edicts.

In the great marts of Pāṭaliputra, Vaiśālī, Champā, Banārasa, Kauśāmbī, Sāketa (Ayodhyā), Śrāvastī, Mathurā and Taxila goods were assembled from all parts of the civilized world. Rhys Davids observes: 'Silks, muslins, the finer sorts of cloth and cutlery and armour, brocades, embroideries and rugs, perfumes and drugs, ivory and ivory work, jewellery and gold (seldom silver)—these were the main articles in which the merchants dealt'. Pearls, diamonds, gems and sandal wood from the south were sold in the marts of Northern India and Western and Central Asia. Caravans travelling on the Iran and Gāndhāra routes across sand dunes and deserts were steered by the stars, in the coolness of the night, under the land-pilot, Thalaniyāmaka, and the captain, called Sārthavāha. India's exports to Egypt in the period included, according to Greek writers, ivory, tortoise-shell, pearls, pigments and dyes (specially indigo), nard, clothing, malabathron and rare woods. The following would represent the important centres of the textile industry, as recorded in the

Arthaśāstra and the Jātakas: silk weaving: Banārasa, Vaṅga, Puṇḍra, and Suvarṇakuṇḍa; cotton: the finest stuff from Banārasa and Bengal, other centres being Madurā in the south, Aparānta (West-India), Kaliṅga, Vatsa (Kauśāmbi) and Mahiṣa (Māhiṣmati); blankets: Gandhāra, Uddiyana, Nepal and Vaṅga; fibres: Puṇḍra (Northern Bengal), Suvarnakudda (in Kāmarūpa), Magadha and Bālhika.

Maurya India's Intercourse with Western Asia and China

India in the Mauryan Age established intimate contacts with Western Asia and the Mediterranean on one side, and China on the other. The marriage of Chandragupta with a daughter of Seleucos is probably not a historical fact. But the Mauryan Court received Megasthenes and Daimachus as ambassadors from the Seleucid monarch, and an envoy named Dionysius from Ptolemy Philadelphos of Egypt. The Mauryan Emperors must have reciprocated by sending Indians as ambassadors to the foreign countries. The influx of foreigners into the city of Pāṭaliputra was such that a special department existed for their welfare. Berenice and Myos Hormos were the important Red Sea ports through which Indian merchandise, carried by sea-going vessels, regularly found its way to Egypt and the Mediterranean through the trading town of Captos on the Nile; while the ancient northern caravan route, Pāṇini's Uttarāpatha, running from Taxila and Peukelaotis via Kandahar (a corrupt form of the Greek Alexandria) to Persepolis and Susa, or by way of the river Oxus to the Caspian and Black Seas, linked India with the Hellenistic world. Pāṇini, a native of Gandhāra, shows familiarity with Balkh (Bālhika), Iran (Parsa), Prakaṇva (Ferghana), Kamboja (Badakshan-Pamir) and Kuchavara (Kucha). In his erudite work on Pāṇini, V.S. Agarwal refers to the terms mentioned by the famous grammarian that India has derived from her borderlands, such as Yavana (Ionian), Parśu (Parsu of the Behistan inscription), Vṛika (Varka of the Naksh-i-Rustam inscription) and Kantha (town, as in Samarkand), jābāla (goat-herd) and halāhala (poison). In the early Chinese works, *Mu Tien tsu chuan* and *Erh ya*, of the fourth and third century B.C. respectively, or even earlier, Goodrich finds the use of the Sanskrit word Siṃha (Chinese Seng-ge), or lion.

A striking testimony to the influence of Indian culture in the Hellenistic world is provided by the thirteenth Rock Edict of Aśoka, which mentions that on account of Indian missionary activities the

Dhamma was followed in the kingdoms of the following Greek rulers: Antiochos (of Syria), Antigonos Gonatas (of Macedonia), Alexander (of Epirus or Cornith), Ptolemy (of Egypt) and Magas (of Cyrene). Long before Buddhism the Upanişadic and Sāṅkhya doctrines travelled to the Hellenistic world with goods and merchants, and some scholars trace their influence on Pythagoras and Plato, and especially on the later systems of Christian Gnosticism and Neo-Platonism.

Across the Himalayas, in Gandhāra and Gedrosia, Brāhmanism and Buddhism were the prevailing faiths in the Maurya period. 'Hindu Civilization', remarks James Darmesteter, 'prevailed in those parts (Kabul and Seistan), which, in fact, in the two centuries before and after Christ were known as White India, and remained more Indian than Iranian till the Mussalman conquest'. Mauryan cultural expansion beyond the Pamir is indicated by the fact that the Sassanians of the third century A.D., regarded Bactria as virtually an Indian country, and the Oxus as a river of the Buddhists and Brāhmans. The entire area, including the valleys of the Helmund, Kabul, Oxus and Tarim, in the early centuries B.C. and A.D., came under the aegis of Vedic culture. This is pointed out by F. W. Thomas, who remarks that, 'in regard to the peoples of northern Afghanistan, it is likely, since to the Greeks they seemed to resemble Indians, having elephants in their armies, that they had a share from the beginning in part of the development of Vedic civilization'.

India's National Emblem—the Aśokan Lion Capital at Sārnāth

The imperial message of the Mauryas, whose empire lasted from 322 to 185 B.C., was spread, among other means, by edicts carved on stone pillars, to which reference has already been made. These monumental sculptures were characterised by unrivalled technical skill in execution and rich ancient symbolism. They were constructed by the early emperors after the fashion of the Achaemenids, and adapted by Aśoka for his own moral and religious purposes. The enormous Lion Capital of the Aśokan stone pillar that commemorates the Turning of the Wheel (Chakka-pavattana), or the Buddha's preaching of the First Sermon at the Deer Park at Sārnāth, has been accepted by the Government of India as the national seal or emblem. It once surmounted the high and impressive shaft upon which the Emperor Aśoka inscribed an edict condemning schisms in the faith.

The four majestic lions seated back to back represent the four cardinal points (chaturdiśa) and the spiritual might of the Buddha, Śākya Siṁha, or Lion of the Śākya clan. The lion motif is associated with sovereignty in Western Asia and Vedic India. Thus ancient zodiacal, Brāhmanical and Buddhist symbolism is mingled and re-interpreted for the new faith.

In Pāli literature the Buddha is often compared with the lion and his discourse with the roar of the animal. Below the addorsed lions there is a plinth with carvings of four animals—the elephant, the horse, the bull and the lion. The elephant in early Buddhist texts and art symbolises the Dream and Conception of the Buddha, the bull the Nativity (the Tathāgata being born under the zodiacal sign of Taurus), the horse (kanṭhaka, on which the Tathāgata rode from home to homelessness) the Great Renunciation, and the lion his Universal Sovereignty. The striking and lively composition on the plinth thus represents the principal events in the life of the Tathāgata—the vicissitudes of the life and destiny of multi-born man (the Bodhisattva) that have become universal, eternal and metaphysical. The seated lions, which once supported a stone Wheel, represent the siṃhanāda, or roar of the animal, which shall carry the Dhammachakka-pavattana Sutta to the Four Quarters (Chaturdiśa) of the Universe. The plinth rests on a bell-shaped hanging lotus with inverted petals—the Vedic symbol of the unfolding, proliferating cosmos, and the Buddhist symbol of the firm diamond seat of the Buddha and of the compassionate heart of the Bodhisattva. The whole serves beautifully as the seat for the crowning Dhammachakka, or Wheel of the True Law, displaced and destroyed by vandals. The Wheel, or chakka, of the chariot, as it traverses the whole earth to its ocean limit, is the ancient Vedic symbol of Universal Empire. The Aṅguttara-nikāya Tika-nipāta (Sūtra 14) gives an exposition of the similarity between the Chakkaratna and the Buddha. 'A chakkavatti is a just and pious sovereign subordinate to Dhamma. . . . His chakka is not checked by any human foe whatsoever'. Correspondingly the Tathāgata, 'the just and pious Ruler subordinate to Dhamma, lets his unsurpassed Dhammachakka move (in every direction) on account of Dhamma. . . . That Dhammachakka is not checked by any recluse, Brāhmaṇa, deva, Māra or Brahmā whatsoever in the world'. In a relief at Jaggyyapeta, belonging to the second century B.C., all the treasures of the Buddha as a chakkavatti are shown, viz., the wheel, elephant, horse, jewel, queen, treasurer and minister.

The Buddha is the chakkavatti, or sole monarch of the spiritual world; while Aśoka, devotedly pursuing dharmavijaya, or conquest through righteousness, used the material and moral resources of his vast empire to establish himself as Dhammiko Dhammarāja. The Divyāvadāna actually refers to him as 'chaturbhāga chakkavatti Dhammiko Dhammarājo'. Buddhist tradition extols the legendary figures of Dalhanemi and Mahā-sudassana as all conquering emperors, ruling in righteousness, and Aśoka is held to have emulated them. Thus the composite Lion Capital subtly blends the conception of the universality of the True Law of the Buddha, first taught at Isipatana-migadāva, and the overlordship of Aśoka, conquering the earth not by arms but by righteousness, about two centuries after the Buddha's nirvāṇa. We may recollect in this connection Aśoka's just and unique claim that his chief conquest was the conquest by Dhamma, 'And this has been repeatedly won by His Sacred Majesty both here (in his Dominions) and among all the frontier peoples even to the extent of six hundred yojanas', i.e., across the north-western borderlands, which were under the suzerainty of his Hellenistic contemporaries. The Lion Capital is, indeed, an appropriate symbol of the toleration, secularism and universalism of the Mauryan Empire; while at the same time it bears eloquent testimony to the sensitiveness and majesty of Mauryan art.

Hiuen Tsang, who visited Banārasa in the seventh century A.D., describes the Sārnāth pillar thus: 'A stone pillar about seventy feet high. The stone is altogether as bright as jade. It is glistening, and sparkles like light; and all those who pray fervently before it see from time to time, according to their petitions, figures with good or bad signs. It was here that the Tathāgata, having arrived at Enlightenment, began to Turn the Wheel of the Law'. The extremely bright polish of the Aśokan pillars is the despair of modern engineers and craftsmen.

Kumāradevī's inscription at Sārnāth mentions that she restored the 'Lord of the Turning of the Wheel (Dharmachakra Jina) in accordance with the way in which he existed in the days of Dharmāśoka, the ruler of men'. The reference may be to a sculptural representation of the Buddha that had come down from the age of Dharmāśoka. The famous seated image of the Buddha preaching his first sermon was sculptured at Sārnāth in the Gupta age. The memorable occasion of dharma-chakra-pravartana is symbolised by the carvings of the Wheel, two deer, the Buddha's first disciples, along with the donors, and the Buddha in his appropriate mudrā of discourse, specifically called the dharma-chakra-pravartana mudrā.

CHAPTER VI

HUMANISM IN EARLY BUDDHIST ART

From Metaphysics to Humanism

THE intellectual climate of India from the sixth to the third centuries B.C. was characterised by the development of logic, sophism and a profound metaphysics, and by the rise of innumerable ascetic cults and doctrines designated generally as Śramaṇas and Parivrājakas. The rise of asceticism was, as we have seen, synchronous with the unprecedented suffering and devastation associated with the welding together by blood and iron of clans and tribes into states and kingdoms, and of states and kingdoms into the first Indian Empire, with its capital at Pāṭaliputra. Both the intellectual and the political revolution took place in the Central Ganges Valley, between the Gaṅgā and the Himālayas, which later became the holy land of Buddhism.

In Jainism the bleakness of individual victory or salvation, the rational man's triumph over delusion and defilement, and the cosmology founded on mathematics left little room for emotional life and expression. Likewise in Buddhism the negation of personality and the emphasis on a rational and ethical outlook discouraged the play of imagination and myth-making. But the life of the Indian people was hardly touched by the metaphysical doctrines of the soul and the hair-splitting arguments relating to karma elaborated by the famous founders of Jainism and Buddhism, the Tīrthikas and the Ājīvikas. What stirred the masses were the Tathāgata's contemplation of human suffering with infinite yet serene compassion, and his message of universal charity and goodwill. The Buddha and Mahāvīra, and the infinitely varied Bodhisattvas and Tīrthaṅkaras, captured the hearts of the emotional millions. These great figures, full of sublime pity, patience and benevolence, were exalted as Bhagavatas and worshipped through their manifold relics and symbols. For the first time the common people, who were mostly distant spectators at

the occasional aśvamedha, puruṣamedha, vājapeya, or other sacrifices undertaken by the upper castes, and who were often requisitioned as reluctant workers in these rituals, now found something of direct appeal to their minds and hearts. Among the teachers and monks Buddhism remained largely a philosophical religion founded on reason or elevated jhāna, or mystical experience. Among the common people it became a religion of Bhakti. The transformation took place in the following manner, in the apt words of Sylvain Levi:

'The heavenly gods were eclipsed by Man, who had left His footprints in the soil and His mark in the soul. The places consecrated by His presence were worshipped, His birth-place, the terrace of the Enlightenment, the first preaching, the miracles, His final entry into Nirvāṇa, etc.; His relics were worshipped. First, following the custom widespread in the East, men raised mounds of earth and stone; on these were planted symbols, the wheel of the Law, the umbrella of Sovereignty; the mound was encircled by a railing; gradually stone replaced impermanent wood, and thus the stūpa in its classical form was created, of which Sāñchī is a perfect example. The monks were vowed to an itinerant life, but were forced to settle during the three months of the monsoon. Following their Master's example, the 'beggars' (Sanskrit, bhikṣu) made the best of natural shelters in caves and grottoes; but the church grew and became wealthy, rest-houses were built for the passing monks and became monasteries. Clearly as the result of their respect for tradition, caves were adapted: they were hollowed out, divided into cells, and decorated. The primitive worship had developed also; Buddhism had its liturgy and its collective rites. Corporate life had demanded a monastery, the monastery demanded a chapel, a temple'.

It was in this manner that Buddhism provided a vigorous impulsion to early Indian art, with its soul-kindling humanistic and lyrical note.

Aśoka's Contributions to Art and Morality

The common people had been accustomed to seeing the images of Vāsudeva, or Kṛiṣṇa, and Saṅkarṣaṇa being worshipped and carried in processions conducted with great pomp, as hinted by Megasthenes and Curtius. They also practised a number of sacraments, or maṅgalas, in sickness, marriage, childbirth, and at the

outset of a journey, as mentioned in the ninth Aśokan Rock Edict. All the vulgarity or cruelty towards animals that these implied was eschewed. Aśoka deprecated the observance of these vulgar and futile (kṣudra and nirarthaka) rites and enjoined that they should be reduced to the minimum; his subjects should devote themselves more and more to the real maṅgala, which is the practice of Dharma. Again, in the fourth Rock Edict, religious shows are mentioned at which Aśoka exhibited to his subjects, in effigies, the gods whose abodes they would be able to reach by the zealous practice of Dharma.

It was, moreover, the great Mauryan Emperor Dharmāśoka himself who did so much to popularise the cult of the stūpa, described in the Divyāvadāna as 'high as a hill top' and the worship of the Buddha's relics, many of which were already enshrined in stūpas visited by large crowds. The stūpa was originally a burial ground, but it became the grand monument of Buddhism, its high and majestic dome in the form of a bubble recording the Buddhist conviction that all corporeal things are transient. On the flattened top there is a parasol, symbolic of the sovereignty of Dharma. Bhārhut stūpa has disappeared, but Sāñchī stūpa, 84 feet in height, which was constructed by Aśoka, still enables us to envision the entire social setting of the inspiration the Buddha provided and the way in which his message was propagated centuries after his demise.

The humanism of Aśoka and the rescue of the ancient; tolerant, universal code of duties and obligations (porānā-pakiti) from neglect which he sought were essentially products of the age, saturated as it was with the charity and compassion of primitive Buddhism. Aśoka, though a Buddhist himself, preached through his inscriptions, dharmalipis as he called them, not a particular formal creed but a liberal and tolerant ethical and social code, a code to promote the good life. The glorification of morality (dhammassa cha dīpanā) is the essence of Aśoka's dharma. The seventh Rock Edict runs thus: 'King Devānāṃpriya Priyadarśin desires that all sects may reside everywhere. For these all desire both self-control and purity of mind. But men possess various desires and various passions. Either they will fulfil the whole or they will fulfil only a portion (of their duties)'. Following the ancient wisdom of his race, Aśoka, though a propagandist, dilated in the last years of his reign on man's need of inner illumination, thought-power and will-power (parākrama). If Aśoka made any innovations in the current dharma and depended upon the sanctions of the law and the zeal of the Mahāmātras to enforce them, these were the total prohibition of the slaughter of birds and animals and the

deprecation of 'the diverse, petty and worthless rites and ceremonies commonly in vogue, especially among the women-folk'.

Such imperial directives were broad and ethical in their appeal and must have obtained popular support; for two centuries had elapsed between the death of the Buddha and the conversion of Aśoka, and a humane religion had become the faith and practice of the people, spreading goodwill and compassion to animals, to slaves, agricultural labourers and the have-nots, to the savage tribes of the forests, and to big and small neighbouring states alike, so that there was amity and security all round. Aśoka is great because he transformed a local Magadhan creed, conceived by the masses largely in terms of pilgrimage to the stūpas and worship of the Bhagavato, Compassionate One, into a universal religion, ethical in its essence and humanitarian in its appeal. But his greatness rests even more on his establishment of the unity of the secular Mauryan state on the permanent moral foundations of tolerance, liberality and compassion towards all. Far more successful than Constantine, Akbar or Charlemagne in basing an empire on a common faith, Aśoka could well remark that gods had begun to mingle with men in Jambūdvīpa as they had never done before. Dharmāśoka narādhipa, as he was gratefully remembered by later generations in India, sent his envoys and messengers far and wide to propagate Dharma and promote peace; he was the world's first internationalist and pacifist ruler. Most appropriately does H. G. Wells consider him 'the greatest of kings in the world'.

The Indus Valley Art Tradition

It is in the light of Buddhist and Jain forbearance, purity and compassion that Mauryan and Śuṅgan art must be interpreted and appreciated. But although this Indian humanism represents the spiritual bond that ties together the products of Bhārhut, Sāñchī, Bodh Gayā (second to first century B.C.) and Bhājā, their dynamic naturalism is a legacy from the art of the Indus Valley. The interval of twenty centuries between the close of the Indus Valley civilization and Indo-Aryan expansion along the banks of the Sarasvatī and Dṛiṣadvatī into the heart of the Ganges Valley did not sever the inner links between the massiveness and plastic vigour of the bull from the Mohenjo-daro seal and those same qualities in the bulls on the Aśokan columns at Sārnāth and Rāmpurvā; between the

restrained power and fleshiness of the Harappa red stone torsos and those of the Yakṣa statues at Pārkham, Patna and Baroda (Maurya period); and between the sensitive modelling of the bronze dancing girl from Mohenjo-daro and that of the Yakṣī from Didārgañj (third century B.C.) and the railing of Bodh-Gayā (150–100 B.C.). The sensuous tilt of the hips of the sophisticated and provocative Mohenjo-daro dancing girl becomes the conventional gesture of feminine charm and elegance in Indian sculpture, just as the yoga concentration of the limestone statue at Mohenjo-daro becomes the prototype of masculine serenity and conquest of the flesh.

The plastic vitality and subtlety of the Indus Valley animals, such as the bull, elephant, buffalo, tiger and mythical beast, are directly derived from magic and the cult of animal guardianship or fertility, which have since sunk into oblivion. Similarly the separate modelling of the genital organs, besides that of the arms and head, and their socketing into the Harappa torso has, according to Marshall, ithyphallic significance. The atmosphere of an all-pervasive magic is what connects dynamically tree, animal and man in the Indus culture—the tree which is human-divine, the animal that bears multiple heads, and the man who also has a number of heads or limbs.

A fresh significant link between Indus Valley and Indo-Aryan art is the image of Pṛithvī (the earth goddess) on the gold tablet discovered at Lauriya-Nandangarh. Its nakedness, exaggeration of the sexual organs and simplified three-dimensional modelling are directly derived from the Indus Valley tradition. This tablet is assigned by Bloch to the eighth and seventh centuries B.C. The later Brāhmaṇas and the Gṛihya Sūtras are full of references to the fashioning of images, of gods and goddesses, mūrtis and devatā pratimās, and also to temples that were made of wood; the stone-cutter replacing the wood-carver in the Maurya period. The worship of images, such as those of Kṛiṣṇa, Śiva or Īśvara, Jayanta and Śrī, must have been prevalent and widespread at the close of the previous millennium and the beginning of this. Pāṇini speaks of pratikṛitis, or images, and even of their use as a means of livelihood. The Arthaśāstra, as well as Āpastamba's Gṛihya Sūtra, refer to the worship of tutelary deities, which included the Yakṣas; among whom Pāṇini mentions Mahārāja, or Vaiśravaṇa-Kubera, Śevala, Supari, Viśāla, Varuṇa and Aryamā. The Jñātadharmakathā Sūtra speaks of such deities as Indra, Skanda, Rudra, Śiva, Vaiśravaṇa and Nāgas, and of 'the figures of the goddesses and altars which are to be carved on the

wooden door-frames of the royal underground chamber'. The Dharmāśoka Pāli-Sutta Vibhaṅga mentions portraits in fresco (lepachittam) and female figures in wood (kaṭṭhadhītalikā). Wooden images of popular deities and decorative carving must have been common in the Aśokan and pre-Aśokan epoch. Early Indian sculpture was devoted to the gateways and railings of stūpas, which continued to be built in the manner of the traditional wooden structures, and it bore the indelible impress of the wood-carver's craft. Certain terracotta heads discovered at Basāṛh, Sārnāth, Bhiṭā and Mathurā, and usually attributed to the Mauryan age, bear a resemblance to the Indus Valley figurines.

The Assimilation of Folk Cults in Buddhist Art

Underneath orthodox Brāhmanism and Buddhism there flourished a medley of deep-rooted popular cults. Buddhism replaced the primeval tree-worship of India by the worship of the Bodhi tree. The tales of Sujātā and Punnā approaching the Nyagrodha (banyan) tree and mistaking Buddha for the tree-spirit, and of the worship of the Nyagrodha by a herd of wild elephants in the thick of the forest near Banarasa testify to this. Similarly the new religion assimilated, or compromised with, the worship of Yakṣas, Nāgas and Gandharvas, Devatās and Vṛikṣakās, the Earth and Mother goddesses, and the divinities of fertility, Apsarās and Bhūtas. Many of them are figured at Bhārhut, Sāñchī and Bodh Gayā as guardian spirits of the stūpa, or as purely decorative figures on the gateways—evidence of the higher religion coming to terms with folk-cults and beliefs. The lithe Yakṣī swings like a mango-blossom with her heaving bosom and gay abandon at the gateway of the Sāñchi stūpa; her joy and pagan passion for life are in marked contrast to the severity and reverence of the unending procession of Buddhist monks and nuns that must have passed below her across the centuries. Similarly at Bhārhut we find a relief representing a troupe of apsarās singing and dancing; even their names are given: Subhadrā, Sudarśanā, Miśrakeśī and Alambuṣā.

Buddhism opened its door to the submerged non-Aryan strata of the population and produced a marked upsurge of popular religious enthusiasm. This not only brought about an easy assimilation of the beliefs and cults of the soil into the new faith, the worship of stūpas and trees, yakṣas and yakṣiṇis, nāgas and apsarās, earth-spirits

and water-spirits, but also left its mark on the art of Bhārhut, Sāñchī and Bodh-Gayā. The zest for story-telling, the acute delight in purely mundane affairs and the exuberant sensuousness of early Buddhist art are the outcome as much of the release of popular enthusiasm and imagination as of the piety and humanity of the Buddhist monastic order.

Orthodox Brāhmanism seems to have absorbed the popular goddess Śrīmā as the Goddess of Abundance, and perhaps also Sudarśanā as the Goddess of still waters. In the Bhārhut relief Śrīmā is vigilant and outward-looking, while Sudarśanā is introspective, although there is poise in both. The cult of Śri-devatā is referred to at a later date in the Milinda-pañho.

The Blend of the Old Naturalism and the New Spirituality in Art

The earlier representations of the primeval spirits of forest and lake and of the quarters of the earth in massive colossal forms at Didārgañj, Besnagar and Mathurā bear the obvious imprint of the supernatural vigour and potency of the Indus Valley statuettes. Underlying their inception is the extensive undercurrent of popular belief in magic that stems from the Indus Valley culture. As this is absorbed by a higher religion, however, and a new iconography develops to suit the requirements of the developing religion, the new style takes on a deeper meaning; though the conventional animal and dwarf motifs are retained, relics of a forgotten primeval outlook and tradition.

It is in the modelling of the animals that Mauryan and Śuṅgan plastic art exhibits many remarkable qualities, built up on the Indus Valley tradition. These can be seen by comparing the elephant in the Mohenjo-daro seal with the elephant carved on the rock at Dhauli by Aśoka. Both exhibit the same dynamic realism, majestic aloofness and quiet dignity, but underlying the plastic treatment of the Dhauli elephant, the Rāmpurvā bull and the Sārnāth lion there is a new spiritual and aesthetic vision. Its complex texture is woven by two major trends of thought and feeling, trends which dominated the centuries that intervened between Harappa and Mohenjo-daro on the one hand, and Sārnāth and Sāñchī on the other: first, a transcending sense of the continuity, through many levels or dimensions, of the life of the Supreme spirit in orthodox Brāhmanism, and of the

multi-born Great Person, or Bodhisattva, in Buddhism, due to which animals share man's conscience, dignity and enjoyment of bliss; and second, man's infinite tenderness and compassion for all sentient creatures. Both these intuitions were underlined for the Indian world by Buddhism and Jainism. The sense of the unity and solidarity of creation and the eternal character of the Great Miracles of the Nativity, Departure and Demise of the Buddha gave a metaphysical, timeless character to Indian plastic art and introduced its early classic phase.

Formal and Metaphysical Values in the Art of Bhārhut and Sāñchī

The major characteristics of this period, as seen at their best in the art of Bhārhut, Sāñchī and Bodh Gayā, that is Aśokan or a little later than Aśokan, are: first, the absence of any sharp line between architectural forms and decorative designs, thus introducing the basic Indian tradition, in which architecture and sculpture form an integral whole; second, a flowing rhythm of composition, which carries a mass of figures, plants, animals, men, fairies and symbols, at various angles and in finely graduated planes in high tension, and yet tames and disciplines them by a far-seeing and wide-awake serenity; and, third, the use of the 'continuous narrative' technique, by means of which an entire story is unfolded through several episodes by the repetition of various figures and objects in the reliefs. This method is a product of the stress Buddhism lays on the chain of karma, with its good and evil consequences through the course of time, and it promotes great depth and intensity of artistic expression.

Most early Indian sculptures are reliefs, which facilitate a clever use of chiaroscuro and a shaded background for setting off the movement of the plastic mass. There is, of course, a marked difference between Bhārhut and Sāñchī. Sāñchī produces certain animals, such as elephants and horses, and the Yakṣiṇīs in the round, that have a remarkable rhythm and elegance of movement nowhere met with in Bhārhut. Here the compositions become tenser and more variegated, and the figures show greater freedom of bodily movement and even stress and commotion, and there is also a more skilful utilisation of light and darkness. In places Sāñchī advances towards epic grandeur, true to the religious pomp and pageantry of the Aśokan age; while Bhārhut is on the whole conceived and executed with primitive

dramatic vigour and the lyrical intensity and pathos that Buddhism added to the mind and heart of India. But Bhārhut, Bodh-Gayā and Sāñchī are all equally permeated by a spontaneous surging plastic rhythm that overflows the schematism of a frame. Each figure, carved with meticulous attention to detail, is posed and modelled according to the demands of an over-all, pervasive rhythm, an *a priori* harmony, a soveriegn equilibrium that reveals the Buddhist miracle for ever taking place, the transcendent eternally present. The metaphysical basis of this plastic vitality that bursts forth in bubbling forms in lavish profusion and does not easily acknowledge the confines of a frame is the conception that life in man does not differ in kind or degree from life in plants and animals.

The Uniqueness of Early Buddhist Animal Sculpture

The Bhārhut, Sāñchī, and Bodh Gayā reliefs admirably enshrine a unique technical achievement: the realisation of a perfect harmony in the treatment of man, his fellow animals, and the vegetable world —all linked together in the procession of life and karma, and all breathing the essentially Indian spirit of dignity, compassion, and brotherhood. Such an all-embracing harmony is not to be found in the supreme creations of the classical periods of either Greece or China. One may recall the Sāñchī relief, eastern gateway, middle lintel, depicting the Buddha in the thick forest, alone in the company of wild beasts, lions, buffaloes, antelopes, birds, serpents, and monsters. That is a holy brotherhood of sentient creatures. The scene may be reminiscent of an episode in the Buddha's career. The Tathāgata did actually abandon the Saṅgha on one occasion after an internal schism at Kauśāmbī, and went to live among the beasts, as he had done in his many past existences as a Bodhisattva. All this lends a new aesthetic zest to the rendering of animals as full of supernatural attributes and potentialities in early Indian sculpture.

Furthermore, man, animal, tree and plant are sculptured with a naturalism, freedom, and spontaneity of feeling that even Greek art could not equal. 'Some animals', Fergusson observes, 'such as elephants, deer and monkeys, are better represented in Bhārhut than any sculpture known in any part of the world; so too are some trees, and the architectural details are cut with an elegance and precision that are very admirable. For an honest purpose-like pre-Raphaelite kind of art, there is probably nothing much better to be found else-

where'. The blend of dynamic naturalism, concentrated expressiveness, and intimate human feelings of tenderness and dignity in early Buddhist animal modelling has its counterpart in Europe only in the lamb, horse, and goat of the manger at Chartres, in European Gothic, which was inspired by the same broad and compassionate interest in humanity.

For delicacy, sensibility, and introspective radiance in the animal figures the following shining examples at Bhārhut and Sāñchī are particularly noteworthy: the elephants illustrating the Nāga Ṣaḍdanta and Laṭuvā Jātaka stories at Bhārhut; the apes and the elephants in procession representing an unidentified story, and the majestic golden gazelle representing the Ruru Jātaka story, also at Bhārhut; and the various elephants, buffaloes, horses and apes at Sāñchī, eastern and northern gates.

Symbols of the Buddha in Early Buddhist Art

The rendering of animals as Bodhisattvas received an indirect fillip from the injunction against representing the Buddha in person. In the Milindapañho the king asks Nāgasena: 'What is the good of setting up a mound to contain the jewel-treasure of the corporal relics (śarīra-dhātu) of the Tathāgata by way of reverence or gift when he has died away and accepts it not?' The omission of the Buddha figure from the crowded panorama of life is the true artistic interpretation of the Buddha's studied silence when asked about the after-death state of those who have attained Nirvāṇa. 'The contemplatives go out like this lamp' which, once extinguished, 'cannot pass on its flame'. It is a state of existence where there is no name or form and about which 'no further questions can be asked by those who are still on fire'.

The Buddha is never shown in human form lest he be thought of as a man; for the Buddha denied that he was 'either a man, or a god, or a demon', amongst men; he had not in fact 'become anyone'. In the Kaliṅga-bodhi Jātaka the Buddha is asked 'by what kind of halo, shrine, or symbol he can properly be represented in his absence. The answer is that he can properly be represented by a Bodhi-tree, whether during his life-time or after the Departure, or by bodily relics after this Decease; the indicative (uddeśika) iconography of an anthropomorphic image is condemned as groundless and conceptual, or conventional'. Where the theme of the sculpture is drawn from the

mundane life of the Teacher, his presence at each stage of the story is indicated by the appropriate symbol. At Bhārhut and Sāñchī the Chaitya tree, umbrella, wheel, and feet denote the actual presence of the Master, before whom Ajātaśatru and Elāpatra kneel. Even the inscriptions name the event as 'worshipping the Buddha'. In some of the Jātaka scenes, however, the figure of a Bodhisattva is represented.

Due to the earlier iconoclastic attitude of Buddhism, Indian, and hence Oriental, art was profoundly enriched with abstract symbols and motifs. Many of these were no doubt Vedic and Indian, but some were taken over from the Near East. As Buddhism became the religion of the masses, however, Indian art achieved a fusion of anthropomorphic and abstract elements that satisfied the requirements of both intellectual comprehension and emotional fervour. Even before the sacred feet (pādukā), symbolising the Buddha in the sculpture of Amarāvatī, we find a group of remarkably graceful, prostrate feminine figures fully expressing the profound devotion (bhakti) of the multitude to the Great Compassionate One. Buddhism and Brāhmanism settled the iconoclastic controversy early by the recognition that it is not the image that is significant in worship, but the super-sensible Being or subject incarnated in it. The Saddharma puṇḍarīka makes it clear that 'the image in itself is of no value; all depends on what he does, who looks at it; what is expected of him is an act of contemplation such that when he sees before him the characteristic lineaments, it is for him as though the whole person of the Buddha were present; he journeys in spirit to the transcendent gathering on Vulture Peak.'

Though the fashioning of images of the Buddha himself was prohibited, the prohibition did not extend to the myriad animal forms in which the Buddha had shown his courage, compassion, and self-sacrifice in his previous births. These, therefore, above all, became popular substitutes for him. They elicited the worship and devotion of the common man, and through them the attempt was made, in radiant, tender reliefs, to express and relive the serenity and dignity of the Tathāgata.

Story-telling in Art

The animal stories are principally derived from the Jātakas, or Birth legends of the Buddha, which formed the entire subject matter

of early Buddhist art; it was only from the first century B.C. that episodes from the actual life of the Master and the Great Miracles were depicted. The Jātakas owe their genesis to the resolution of the Brāhmaṇa Sumedha, who countless ages ago rejected the thought of individual salvation and the prospect of becoming an Arhat. 'Let me rather,' he observed, 'having risen to the supreme knowledge of the truth, enable all men to enter the ship of truth, and thus I may bear them over the sea of existence; and then only let me realise Nibbāna myself'. The Chulla-Niddesa makes mention of a collection of 500 legends. In the reliefs at Bhārhut we find the actual names of the Jātakas inscribed, and in one case a half-verse is quoted. Some of the ancient stories are much older than Buddhism itself, and the fact that Indian classical sculpture selected these as its favourite themes had the great advantage of preventing the developing canons of a hieratic art from obscuring man's perennial interest in story-telling.

Hundreds of tales were rehearsed in the context of Indian social life by the Bhāṇakas, or reciters, among the monks as the generations of stone-cutters went on with their carving for whole centuries. The entire panorama of Indian life, with its scenes of passion and compassion, wickedness and benevolence, reward and punishment, life and death, is ardently and skilfully rendered; and over the vicissitudes of saṃsāra broods the perennial presence of Bhagavato Sakamunino Bodho, the Leader of the human caravan through the aeons; Whom gods and demons, water-spirits and goblins, and even the monsters and dumb animals all adore. There is also fluent sculpturing of fables for the sheer delight of story-telling—the mischievousness of the ape, the greed of the crow, the raptures of the peacock, the savagery of nature, red in tooth and claw; the callousness of man towards his less fortunate fellows, his ingratitude towards the animal species, his whims, frivolities and temptations; the treachery of the wicked housewife, the unchastity of the secluded woman; the invention of wonderful needles by a love-sick blacksmith, the sudden discovery of water in the trackless desert by caravan merchants, or the protection of storm-tossed sea-voyagers by a monster fish. And along with this precious heritage of old-world tales and fables, which have indeed migrated from India far beyond her borders to enliven and enrich in later ages the Gesta Romanorum and Christian fables, early Buddhist art seizes also upon literary themes. Thus the familiar trees, śāla, plakṣa, mango, nyagrodha, kadamba, aśoka and champaka appear, with their buds, flowers, and fruits, modelled naturalistically, not conventionally. All the stories,

so delightfully depicted and reverently repeated, are timeless in their bearing on human life and destiny.

The Elephant and Lotus Motifs

Man, beast, bird, reptile, teacher and god are portrayed in all possible situations and crises, and the moral drawn for the understanding and perfection of man. In the complex drama of life we find the lives of man and deer or serpent, and of antelope, wood-pecker and tortoise interlocked. There is a symbiosis in the realm of all living creatures; a grand symbiosis that is personified in the career of the Bodhisattva, or the Awakening Spirit of Man. The biography of the ever-wakeful, multi-born Bodhisattva unfolds the perfection of animate life, touching it through innumerable struggles and sacrifices at all its levels. This is symbolised in early Buddhist art in Bhārhut, Bodh Gayā, Sāñchī and Udayagiri by the Elephant (the Gajottama of the Aśokan Rock Edict at Girnār and Kālsī), who enters the womb of Māyā in the Bhārhut and Sāñchī reliefs, and from whose mouth sprouts forth a sinuously gliding lotus creeper to border the copings, panels and roundels, covered with birth-legends, medallions and flower decorations in an unending procession. The boundless movement of the lotus plant, with its tumultuous outburst of leaves, buds and full-blown flowers interspersed with geese, is found everywhere in Bhārhut, Sāñchī, Udayagiri, and Amarāvatī. The blending of delicacy with luxuriance and placid proportion with playfulness is reminiscent of European Baroque. At Sāñchī the stages in the maturation of the lotus plants, with their clearly defined, delicate outlines (see, for instance, the left pillar of the East Gate) can easily be distinguished. Behind the onrush of the rambling, blossoming and heaving vegetation, endless in its linear rhythms and lyrical arrangements, its spirit permeating every element of the sculpture, lies the venerable symbolism of the lotus plant as the upsurge of the compassion and resolution of the Bodhisattva. The lotus represents at once the resplendent sun in the sky, the compassionate heart of the Bodhisattva, and the proliferating, ever-variegated cosmic process. Flowing, buoyant and yet orderly, the creeper is an enduring motif, whose influence persists even in the limbs and attitudes of human and animal figures modelled across the centuries. It is an abiding contribution of early Buddhist tradition to Indian art.

Being and Becoming in Art

The rhythmical sway of the sprouting lotus foliage is in India the type and symbol of the inexhaustible rhythm of life. In the earlier Bhārhut, Sāñchī, Mathurā and Bodh-Gayā reliefs, animals, men and symbols are caught up in the gentle, ever-recurrent movement of vegetation, whether of lotus plants, ferns, flowers and petals, or of the śāla and nyagrodha trees of Buddhist myth. The jackals in the Bhārhut sculpture, like their kinswoman, Āṣāḍhā, have exaggerated or foreshortened limbs to repeat the movements of the branches of the tree. Chulakokā Devatā's rhythm of gesture and movement follows that of the fruit-bearing tree to which she clings. A similar reciprocity of form and movement in vegetation, man and animal is discernible in the rendering of the Jetavana garden, the hunting of the golden gazelle, the episode of the Ṣaḍdanta Jātaka, and the visit of the forest animals to the Bodhi tree. The disposition of the various animals in packs amongst the luxuriant foliage of the lotus creeper on the pillar of the West gateway at Sāñchī is most exquisite. The forms and rhythms in early Indian art come from the measureless matrix of Being or the Buddha. The result is an exuberant plastic vitality overlaid by a rhythmical order and discipline, which is sometimes relaxed, giving play to a profusion and even explosiveness of motifs and patterns, and sometimes enforced, producing a profound plastic steadiness and tranquillity.

Of all the plant motifs the lotus-creeper is the most dominant and universal, typifying the slow, ceaseless and exuberant vegetable life of the Indian environment. But the natural luxuriance of the lotus is given a profound meaning by Indian culture, for the lotus grows out of dark clay and putrid matter. There is also another metaphor. In the Saṃyutta Nikāya we read: 'Just as, Brethren, a lotus is born in the water, full-grown in the water, rises to the surface and is not wetted by the water, even so, Brethren, the Tathāgata, born in the world, full-grown in the world, surpasses the world and is unaffected by the world'. In the Buddhist imagination the cosmos represents the procession of the forms of the Buddha, without birth and death—as charming and perennial as the tendrils and blossoms of the lotus plant, which shoots forth from the mire and filth of world passion, fault and delusion (rāga, doṣa and moha). The cycles of saṁsāra and nirvāṇa, goodness and evil, suffering and serenity are momentary drops or ebulitions of Reality; which is the Oneness of Buddha-Life, Life that for ever pushes forward towards a perfection far trans-

cending the actual and the given. It is not nirvāṇic calm, but the unimpeded, joyous, infinite aspiration of life that is symbolised by the Celestial White Elephant with the lotus foliage issuing from its mouth and ramifying in its slow, ceaseless, rhythmical proliferation—the Bodhisattva-hood of self-expression and self-transcendence in the order of nature. Not the Buddha or Being, but the Bodhisattva, Becoming or Awakening, embodies the spirit and essence of early Buddhist art.

CHAPTER VII

THE TOLERANCE AND COSMOPOLITANISM OF THE ŚUṄGA RENAISSANCE

The Rise of Śiva, Kṛiṣṇa and Buddha Bhāgavatism

THE centuries immediately preceding the Christian era saw a profound transformation in the faiths of India. All religions began to assume a bhakti character. Śiva, Vāsudeva, and the Buddha, besides the Four Guardians of the Quarters—the Yakṣas—were all styled Bhāgavatas. Pāṇini refers to bhakti directed towards the Mahārājās—the Four Great Kings of the Quarters. The same spirit of devotion is discernible even in the Majjhima Nikāya, which says: 'He who has faith (śraddhā) in Me and love (prema) for Me will attain heaven'; at Bhārhut (second century B.C.) we have the inscription, 'Bhagavato Saka Munino Bodho', and on the Piprāwā vase, 'Budhasa Bhagavate'. The rise of Bhāgavatism represented a protest against renunciation and asceticism, the chief characteristics of the heresies of Ājīvikism, Jainism and Buddhism; it stressed the obligations to family and society, and put spiritual exaltation, associated with the worship of a personal deity, above religious intellectualism and a dry, moral outlook. The Mauryan polity re-established dharma as the supreme norm; Kauṭilya interpreted it in the Vedic way and strove for the recovery of the Varṇāśrama scheme of life. But Aśoka's stress on monachism, even though liberal and broad-minded, tended on the whole to undermine the significance of rituals and sacraments and the solidarity of Brāhmanic interests.

Both Śiva and Kṛiṣṇa Bhāgavatism were accepted more by the foreigners and the low castes than by the high-born of India; and both went against the Varṇāśrama dharma in admitting everybody to worship and to yogic practice or saṃnyāsa. The traditionalists' early reaction to Bhāgavatism is revealed in the following observations by Atri: 'Those Brāhmaṇas who are devoid of Vedic lore study the Śāstras (Grammar, Logic, etc.); those devoid of Śāstric lore study the

Purāṇas and earn their livelihood by reciting them; those who are devoid of Purāṇa reading become agriculturists; and those who are devoid even of that become Bhāgavatas'. This sounds a little strange, for the worship of Vāsudeva and Arjuna had been handed down since the time of Pāṇini; though one should remember that in the Mahābhārata a section of the Kuru minstrels looked down upon Vāsudeva-Kṛiṣṇa as 'vrātya' (outside the pale). The Ābhīras as a body adopted Vaiṣṇavism. The Mahābhārata (Bhiṣmaparva XI, 28) mentions that the Śakas were converted to Śaivism. In the Mṛichchhakaṭika, composed probably between the first century B.C. and the first century A.D., we find mention of the worship of Śiva and Kārttikeya, of the divinities of the household, and of the Divine Mothers 'at a place where four roads meet'. To the household divinities and the Mothers daily offerings were made. The usual gods and goddesses of post-Vedic Hinduism are mentioned in the Mṛichchhakaṭika: Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Hara, Sun and Moon along with Devī, who had slain Śumbha and Niśumbha.

The Occupation of the North-West and West by the Yavanas

With the simultaneous break-up of two mighty empires in Asia, the Mauryan and the Syrian, there had been a continuous incursion of the Yavanas (Greeks or Bactrians) and the Śakas (Scythians) into the plains of the Puñjāb and Saurāṣṭra, across the Khyber and Bolan passes. The Yavanas, or Greeks, conquered not only Gandhāra but also considerable portions of the Puñjāb and Sind, and at one time challenged the arms of Magadha for the mastery of Northern India. There Puṣyamitra (187–151 B.C.), Śūṅga, the Brāhmaṇa minister of the Śuṅga dynasty, led a Brāhmanical revival against both Buddhism and Yavana culture, which by this time engulfed the whole of north-western and western India. The most famous among the Yavana kings was Menander (180 to 160 B.C.), the Milinda of Buddhist literature and Mahārāja Minadra of a Prākrit Kharoṣṭhī inscription found in the north-west frontier region of India. His kingdom extended from the Puñjāb to Saurāṣṭra and the western coast of India; and in one of his adventures he occupied Mathurā, besieged Madhyamikā (near Chittor) in Rājaputānā and Sāketa in Oudh, and even threatened Pāṭaliputra. Under the influence of the famous monk Nāgasena, Menander became a Buddhist. 'The Questions of Milinda' (Milindapañho) represents a philosophical

dialogue between King Menander and the monk Nāgasena, the latter giving an exposition of the illusory character of the human ego. This is the earliest work on Buddhist philosophy that has come down to us, and it is a masterpiece of metaphysical argumentation and use of dialectic. Combining Indian philosophical idealism with the Socratic spirit and method of enquiry, it echoes the arguments employed by the Buddhist missionaries in converting the Yavanas.

Besides Menander there were other Yavana rulers of North-western India, such as Demetrius, who is sometimes identified with Dattamitra of the Mahābhārata, with Timitra of the Besanagar seal, and with Kṛimisa of the Divyāvadāna. He seems to have ruled over Bactria, Afghanistan and large parts of the Punjab and Sind valleys. Other Indo-Greek rulers were Eucratides, who probably held the land of the Sindhu along with Afghanistan, and Antialcidas, whose embassy was received at the court of Vidiśā in about 113 B.C. As many as almost thirty Indo-Bactrian Greek rulers are mentioned by various sources, which place them within the two centuries following the reigns of Demetrius and Eucratides. That the presence of the Yavana kings led to widespread social unrest in the country is attested by the Purāṇas, which observe: 'There will be Yavanas here by reason of religious feeling, or ambition, or plunder; they will not be kings solemnly anointed but will follow evil customs by reason of the corruption of the age. Massacring women and children and killing one another, the (Yavana) kings will enjoy the earth at the end of the Kali age'. The final defeat of the Yavanas by the grandson of Puṣyamitra (in about 187–151 B.C.) in a memorable battle fought on the banks of the Sindhu, the tributary of the Chambal, stemmed the tide of Yavana invasions of the Middle Land, and prevented the disintegration of the Magadhan empire, which under the Śuṅgas extended for about a century as far as Vidiśā, if not further west. Besides the Prince of the Śuṅga dynasty, whose exploit is probably the one immortalised in Kālidāsa's Mālavikāgnimitram, two other Indian kings, Bhadrayaśas of the Punjab and Gautamīputra Sātakarṇī, 'the uprooter of the Kṣatriya race', presumably of the Deccan, played significant roles in the destruction of Yavana rule.

Absorption of Foreigners favoured by their Military Defeat

The overthrow of the Yavanas in battle facilitated the process of social and religious assimilation. Clear evidence of this is afforded by

the Mahābhāṣya of Patañjali, a contemporary of Puṣyamitra Śuṅga, which mentions that the Yavanas and the Śakas found a place in the Indian social order as Anirvāsita, or clean Śūdras. Similarly according to the testimony of the Manu Saṃhitā, the Yavanas, Śakas, Pahlavas and Pāradas were assimilated into the Indian social organisation and recognised as degraded Kṣatriyas. Śaivism, Bhāgavatism, and Buddhism were the three faiths through which the Aryanisation of the Romans, Greeks and Scythians was brought about. The Śuṅga period witnessed a national renaissance, centred on the worship of Rudra and Kriṣṇa-Vāsudeva, comparable with the later Gupta Brāhmanical revival. The renaissance was concentrated in the five principal Śuṅga cities: Pāṭaliputra and Ayodhyā, the two capital towns; Vidiśā, the capital of Daśārṇa, whence the grandson and general of Puṣyamitra marched off to defeat the Yavanas on the banks of the River Sindhu (in Gwalior), which formed the barrier between the empire of Puṣyamitra and the Yavana kingdom of Western Malwa; Gonarda, lying between Vidiśā and Ujjain, the birthplace of the famous literary figure of the age, Patañjali (also called the Gonardīya); and Bhārhut, where the famous Buddhist stūpa was built, an impressive testimony to the religious catholicism of the Śuṅga emperors. Of these cities, next in importance to the capital city of Pāṭaliputra was Ujjayinī, which owed its status to the vice royalty of Aśoka and for centuries developed as an important centre of art. Some of the finest gateway railings at Sāñchī were carved in the Śuṅga period.

A Cosmopolitan Age: Yavanas as Bhāgavatas or Pāñcharātras

Taxila, Mathurā, Vidiśā and Barbara were cosmopolitan cities in the Śuṅga age. It was at Besnagar (Bhilsa), near Vidiśā, that a pillar was erected in the second century B.C. in honour of Vāsudeva by a Yavana of Taxila named Heliodorus, who had become a Bhāgavata and who came to the court of Rājan Kāśīputra Bhāgabhadra as an envoy of Mahārājā Antalikita, or Antialcidas. The Brāhmī inscription adds: 'Three immortal precepts (footsteps) when practised lead to heaven—self-restraint (dama), charity (tyāga), and vigilance (apramāda)'—the same virtues as those stressed in the Bhagavad-gītā and the Mahābhārata, and in the same order (xi, 7, 23). A foreign lady, Tosa, is similarly associated with the installation of images of the five holy Pañchavīras (Saṅkarṣaṇa, Vāsudeva, Pradyumna, Sāmba and

Aniruddha), as we learn from an inscription at Mora, near Mathurā, of the first century A.D.

It is remarkable that the blaze of devotion to Kṛiṣṇa-Vāsudeva was responsible for the construction in the first and second centuries A.D. of his first images in stone at Mathurā, then under the Śaka satraps. These figures, both the standing Kṛiṣṇa-Vāsudeva and the Buddha, were fashioned after the pattern of the ancient Parkham and other Yakṣa images, and thus satisfied the contemporary need to give expression to the new Bhāgavatism within the folds of both Hinduism and Buddhism. Apart from the images of the five Vṛiṣṇi heroes at Mora (first century A.D.), we have from the same period the early image of Saṅkarṣaṇa with his snake canopy, now at the Mathurā museum. Mathurā is connected with Kāpiśa and Taxila in the north-west and with Barbara and Barygaza on the sea; and from these cities foreign Hellenistic and Scythian influences poured into the Ganges valley, especially under the direct rule of Hagāna, Hagāmaṣa, Rājuvula, Soḍāsa and their successors, from about the end of the previous millennium to the second century A.D. More than the influence of Hellenistic art the warm devotional fervour of the foreigners, who called themselves Bhāgavatas or Pāñcharātras, was responsible for the construction of the earliest Vāsudeva-Kṛiṣṇa image and the popularity of image worship in orthodox Brāhmanical society.

Not merely Bhāgavatism but also the Māheśvara or Pāśupata cult spread far and wide in India under the Śuṅgas; and it was but natural that foreigners should understand and embrace Bhāgavatism, whether Buddhist, Vaiṣṇava, or Śaiva, rather than the metaphysical speculation and religious rationalism of the sages and śramaṇas. The foreigners' homage to Śiva is abundantly evident from the coins of the Śaka and Pahlava rulers Maues and Gondophernes, and those from Ujjain. Phallic emblems of Śiva without any image have been found in the Mathura region and attributed to the Scythian period.

The Śuṅga revival, as we have seen, stressed the worship of Śiva and was built up on both metaphysical and devotional foundations. It was an all-round rehabilitation of Brāhmanic society and culture, being a powerful reaction against foreign conquest and incursion into the heart of Āryāvarta. But while the characteristic devotional movements of the age, centring on the worship of Rudra and Vāsudeva, forged the links between Indian and foreigner, the broad humanistic code of ethics that was formulated in the same period in

the Mahābhārata and the Gītā also facilitated social and religious assimilation. The upsurge of activity in the spheres of religion, art, and literature, foreshadowing the Golden Age of the Guptas, provided the genial social climate necessary for the absorption of aliens.

The Sanskrit Renaissance

Patañjali's contribution to this renaissance through his part in the consolidation of Brāhmanical learning was exceedingly important. His famous commentary on Pāṇini's grammatical aphorisms helped immensely to replace the Pāli of Emperor Aśoka's time by Sanskrit. In the Mauryan period the emperor's writ circulated in the vernacular, as is evident from the earliest known Brāhmi inscription, which is a notice exhibited on a granary, and from the numerous edicts of Aśoka, who sought to establish the dialect of Pāṭaliputra as the *lingua franca* of India in place of Sanskrit. The Prākrit throve in popular secular literature, and Buddhism, which was a popular religious movement, extensively employed it for literary purposes, leaving Sanskrit to be cultivated by Brāhmanical circles and the orthodox higher social strata generally. The epics use a kind of Sanskrit different from the *bhāṣā* of Pāṇini; and that much attention was given to the forms and functions of literary exposition in Sanskrit is clearly indicated in the Śāntiparva of the Mahābhārata; 'O king, speech should be free from the faults, nine and nine, impairing expression and sense, of adequate meaning and furnished with eighteen excellences (II,930)'. The linguistic excellences and defects are carefully enumerated and expounded in the epic.

The advantage of Sanskrit lay in its superior regularity, as exemplified by the more accurate speech and higher culture of its Brāhmaṇa exponents—the 'śiṣṭas' as Patañjali called them. Patañjali indicates that Sanskrit was the medium of literary expression and was also used in ordinary life (loka) by the upper classes; while the many dialects, called by him Apabhraṃśas, were used by the common people. In the Rāmāyaṇa there is a divergence between the speech of the Brāhmaṇa and the imprecise language of the common man, though both use Sanskrit. In the fragments of Aśvaghoṣa's drama, placed in the first or second century A.D., we find that the Brāhmaṇas, Śramaṇas and the ruling class speak Sanskrit, while women, and men of the lower social strata, speak Prākṛit. The fact of the matter is that the Bhāṣā or Loka, the spoken Sanskrit of the élite,

and the Prākṛit or Apabhraṃśa of the common people were interdependent. This has been pointed out by Keith:

'The matter is really to be viewed not in the light of a contrast between actual spoken language and a Hochsprache. It is rather a matter of class speeches; Yāska spoke Sanskrit much as he wrote it, and the officials of Aśoka equally conversed in a speech similar to that in which they wrote, while contemporaneously lower classes of the population spoke in dialects which were further advanced in phonetic change. The Buddha commanded his disciples to use only popular dialects in reciting his teachings. They followed his instructions for a time. Many dialects all over North India were thus used by local schools of Buddhists. One such dialect, perhaps originally spoken at Ujjain, was Pāli, which was carried to Ceylon, Burma, etc., and became the canonical language of Southern Buddhism.' Another such dialect, of unknown original location, began after a time to be modified by the local Buddhists to make it look more like Sanskrit, the socially respected language of their Brāhmaṇa neighbours. This Sanskritisation was at first slight and partial. As time went on it increased, but it never became complete. Prākṛitic forms continued to be used, and many forms were mixed or hybrid, neither genuine Prākṛit nor standard Sanskrit. The vocabulary, especially, remained largely Prākṛitic. Thousands of words were used which are unknown in Sanskrit, or not used there with the same meanings. To this curious language, which became widespread in North India, Franklin Egerton has given the name Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit. After more than twenty years of research he published, in 1953, the only complete Grammar and Dictionary of the language ever attempted.

One of the major results of the Śuṅga Brāhmanical revival was that Sanskrit became a popular, living language no longer confined to the learned Brāhmaṇa. According to the well-known scholar and linguist F. W. Thomas: 'Amid the confusion of irregular and mixed parlance Sanskrit had the advantage of being a definite norm. The replacement begins at least as early as the first century A.D., though the Prākṛit maintained itself in certain cases down to the third or fourth century. At about this time the Jains began to write in Sanskrit; the Sarvāstivādin Buddhists had begun long before, and the Brāhmaṇa convert Aśvaghoṣa had devoted to Buddhist themes his mastery of the language and of its developed style in poetry. The Mahāsāṅghikas are said to have used from the first the mixed dialect, i.e., the colloquial Sanskrit of the unlearned, interspersed with Prākṛitisms'.

The Religious Vitality of the Age

A considerable body of Brāhmanical literature, including parts of the Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata, the original Purāṇas, and the Mānava Dharma-śāstra, or Manu Smṛiti, is usually regarded as having been produced in the Śuṅga period. Puṣyamitra Śuṅga revived the great Vedic sacrifice as a symbol of world suzerainty, and Patañjali himself probably officiated in it as a priest (iha Puṣyamitraṃ yājayāmaḥ). Patañjali mentions not only such elaborate sacrifices as Rājasūya and Vājapeya, but also the daily Pañchamahā-yajñas, which, he states, ought to be performed by every householder. It is of interest to note also that he speaks especially of animal sacrifices to the god Rudra. The rehabilitation of Vedic sacred rites and ceremonies, sacerdotalism and Brāhmanical authority, the rise of Kṛiṣṇa-Bhāgavatism, which is evident from the popularity of plays about the slaying of Kaṃsa (Kaṃsavadha) and the binding of Bali (Bali-bandha), and even persecution of the Buddhists were features of the return to Brāhmanical orthodoxy during the Śuṅga period.

But neither Buddhism nor Jainism was eclipsed, for some magnificent Buddhist and Jain monuments were erected in the kingdom of the Śuṅgas. Mahārāja Khāravela of Kaliṅga, who seems to have flourished in the first century B.C. and to have established a large empire in Eastern India, extending into the far south, was a pious Jain. He was called the monk-king (Bhikṣu-rāja); he excavated a number of Jain caves at Khaṇḍagiri and also built a monastery near by. There was a Jain temple in Mathurā which was constructed before 150 B.C.; and the early Mathurā remains include statues of Jain Tīrthaṅkaras and ornamental slabs dedicated to Arhats and other objects of worship. A noteworthy feature of Śuṅga religion is that orthodox Brāhmanism, Jainism and Buddhism, all shared in the worship of stūpas and sacred trees, and of popular devatās, fairies and minor gods. These, besides the wheels, railings and symbolic devices, were equally available as subjects for artists and craftsmen ministering to the needs of their special faiths.

The Indianisation of the Śakas

Thus Buddhism, Jainism and the cults of Kṛiṣṇa-Viṣṇu and Maheśvara were all flourishing side by side in the Yamunā valley and in north-western India. Most of the early Mathurā inscriptions of the

Śaka and Kuṣāṇa epoch, however, are Jain and Buddhist; Bhāgavata inscriptions are very few. The Śaka rulers, who first entered the Puñjāb and the Yamunā valley at about the beginning of the first century A.D. from Śakasthāna via the Bolan Pass, gradually replaced the Indo-Bactrian rulers. They introduced the names of Śakasthāna and its capital Mina, or Minnagara, from Iran into India when they entered Kathiawar and Rajputana, and penetrated up to Multan, Ujjain and, later on, Mathurā. In their new environment the Śakas married into Kṣatriya families, adopted Indian names, and accepted Śiva, Mahāvira and the Buddha as their gods. Many of them used the name Rudra instead of Vāsudeva in their nomenclature.

The votive offerings of many Śaka monarchs in connection with Chaityagṛihas are met with in different parts of north-western and western India. A Nasik cave inscription, dated about A.D. 119 to 125 reveals the generosity of Ūṣavadāta (Ṛiṣabhadatta), a Śaka prince who was converted to Brāhmanism. In addition to a liberal donation for the maintenance of Hindu gods and Brāhmaṇas, the inscription records the bestowal of the cave on the Buddhist Saṅgha, together with a perpetual endowment. Details of the investment are mentioned, and the gift was registered at the local record office 'according to custom'. Ūṣavadāta's wife had an Indian name too, Dakshamitrā. He had eight Brāhmaṇa maidens married off in Prabhāsa, and on account of his beneficence to Hinduism he was given the title Trigośatasahasradā, the giver of three hundred thousand cows.

Such was the spell of the Indian religions on the foreigners, who came as invaders and were gradually, so to speak, socially Indianised.

Mathurā, one of the most ancient seats of Indian culture, came under the authority of the Śaka ruler Maues (about 20 B.C. to A.D. 22), and remained under Śaka rule during the times of Rājuvula and his son Soṃḍāsa or Śoyāsa. Up till the second quarter of the second century A.D. a large portion of India from Kapiśa to Mathurā, and from Kashmir to the Deccan, continued to be under the occupation of Śaka satraps, even though they were displaced from Mathurā by the Kushāṇa emperor Kaniṣka at the outset of his career of conquest. Some scholars identify the Śaka era of the Scythian-Parthians with Vikram-Saṃvat of 58 B.C. The Indianisation of the Śakas is fully borne out by their names and titles. The term 'Satrap' comes from the Sanskrit Kṣatrapa. The Indian names of Śaka rulers include Ghaṭaka, Rudradāman, Rājula, Śoḍāsa, Śiva Ghoṣa and Śiva Datta.

The Extension of the Vedic Sacramental Mantle to Foreigners

Brāhmanical society reacted to the foreign conquest, infiltration and Westernisation with characteristic hope and courage. The Mahābhārata, though it mentions with horror the depredations of Śakas and allied fierce (dāruṇa) barbarians (Mlechchhas) in the evil age that was coming (III–188), declares that Vedic duties and rites should be ordained for the Yavanas, Kirātas, Gandhāras, Tuṣāras and Pahlavas residing in the dominions of Aryan kings (LXV, V. 13). We hear about the various sets of duties for peoples of mixed origin and for divergent regions and tribes even from the mouth of Kṛṣṇa, who remarks to Bhīṣma: 'The duties which have been laid down for those sprung from an intermixture of the four orders, and those laid down for particular countries and tribes and fraternities, and those prescribed by the Vedas and by men of wisdom, are all well known to thee' (Rāja-dharma, LX, p. 156).

In one breath the Mahābhārata denounces the Pahlavas, Śakas, Yavanas and Kambojas as sinful, and in the next it opens the doors of Brāhmanical society to them and extends the sacramental mantle of Vedic culture. This facilitated the social assimilation of the foreigners. Three new sociological concepts introduced flexibility into the Varṇāśrama-dharma so that it could be squared with the larger social needs of the age. First, the theory of Āpaddharma was formulated in the Mahābhārata (Śāntiparva, LXXVIII, V, 2) and the early Dharma-śāstras, enabling caste men to accept roles and occupations normally forbidden and even reprehensible. Secondly, the theory of Kali-yuga was developed so as to minimise the evils of social chaos and disintegration, which were thus attributable to the inexorable law of the cycle of yugas. Social defeatism was overcome by the prophecy of a righteous order of society 'to come'. Thirdly, though the seed of the theory of incarnation, or Avatāra, was sown in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa and other early texts, it was developed in this age and based on the personalities of Kṛṣṇa-Vāsudeva and Gautama, whose periodic manifestations, it was held, would restore the righteous order of society. In early Brāhmaṇa literature we find Viṣṇu assuming various forms to recapture the earth, wrested from the gods by the Asuras. Similarly, in the Bhārhut reliefs we find the Buddhist doctrine of successive incarnations of the Buddha. Above all, the worship of a personal deity, just as it elicited the warmth and fervour of the foreigners, kindled the faith of the Indian in a divinely ordained society, and protected him against the alien influences

arising from foreign conquest or occupation. Each of the Śuṅga notions of Āpaddharma, Kaliyuga and Avatāra prepared the Indian ethically for his acceptance of the foreigner into his divinely fashioned social system. The Mahābhārata gave classic expression to the broad humanism of Indian culture: 'This is the secret and supreme doctrine I announce to you. There is nothing in the universe higher than Man'.

The Cross-fertilisation of Brāhmanical, Iranian, and Greek Culture

The tolerance of the age permitted a cross-fertilisation of the ancient Brāhmanical, Iranian, and Greek cultures, with the Parthians playing an important role as intermediaries; as is clearly indicated by the excavations of the Parthian city of Sirkap in the Taxila area. Indian merchants, pilgrims and scholars not only came from Madhyadeśa to Kathiawar, Puñjāb, Kashmir and Gandhāra, but they also visited Syria and Egypt. Both overland and maritime traffic between India and Western Asia was brisk in the Greco-Bactrian and Scythian age, and such cities as Taxila, Barbara, Palmyra, Petra and Alexandria became great international centres. Indian colonists are mentioned at Taron on the Euphrates, where Indian temples were built as early as the second century B.C.; and they are mentioned by Dio Chrysostom in about A.D. 117 as permanent residents at Alexandria. Overland trade with the Levant was stimulated by the occupation of Bactria, Sogdiana, Afghanistan and North-western India by Demetrius and Menander in the second century B.C. Cut off by the Scythian conquest of Bactria in about 135 B.C., and by the long struggle between Rome and Parthia, which began in 53 B.C., it revived when Pompey imposed a Pax Romana upon Syria, and when the Palmyrenes opened up a short cut from Dura to Damascus across the northern corner of the North Arabian desert. However, it was not until the advent of the Kuṣāṇa in this region in the first century A.D., and their subsequent conquest of the whole of Gandhāra and north-west India, that trade by the ancient land route through Iran was fully restored.

With regard to the maritime traffic, Tarn, who has studied Indo-Levantine commerce in this period, notes the following stages. Trade along the maritime route was controlled by South Arabian middlemen until the first through-voyage from Egypt to India was made

by Eudoxus of Cyzicus in about 120 B.C. Eudoxus's Greek successors gradually shortened the voyage—which in Eudoxus's day was still made coastwise all the way—by cutting more and more adventurously across the open sea with the aid of the monsoons; and this process of shortening, which began in about 100–80 B.C., was completed in about A.D. 40–50, when the Greek navigators of the Indian Ocean ventured at last to sail straight across from the Somali coast to the southern tip of India, without approaching Arabia at all. A full description of voyages from Barygaza and Barbara to the ports of the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea is given in the Periplus of the Erythraean Sea, written in A.D. 70–80; it also mentions a colony of Indians at Socotra. As a result of this Greek conquest of the Indian Ocean, pepper was obtainable in abundance at Athens in 88 B.C., and a Buddhist gravestone with wheel and triśūla, erected before the end of the Ptolemaic age, has been discovered by Sir Flinders Petrie at Alexandria.

In the course of the four centuries between the simultaneous establishment of the Mauryan Empire in India (*c.* 324 B.C.) and that of the Seleucids in Western Asia (*c.* 305 B.C.) and the discovery of the monsoons by the Greek navigator Hippalus in about 45 B.C., India was brought into closer and closer contact with Syria and Egypt. Maritime trade was fostered by the Ptolemies' policy of establishing direct communication with India, thus freeing the Roman Empire from commercial dependence on the Arabs. Under the Pax Romana the policy was maintained in the first two centuries of the Christian era, and colonies of Roman and Egyptian traders settled in the principal sea-ports of South India. Spices, perfumes, pearls, precious stones, silks and muslins comprised the chief merchandise in demand throughout the Roman Empire. Indian imports included the linens of Egypt and Babylon, topaz from the Red Sea, coral from the Levant, and wine, gold and silver from Rome. The balance of payments was entirely in India's favour, which raised the voice of Pliny against the annual drain of a hundred million sestertii.

The discovery of the monsoon winds on the Arabian Sea, the demand for luxury articles in the Roman Empire, and the by-passing of the overland route through the hostile Parthian kingdom, made possible by the direct contact between the ports of the Red Sea and those of the Arabian sea coast, enormously facilitated intercourse between India and the West, and sea-borne trade with Rome flourished up to as late as the sixth century A.D. The cities of the Puñjāb, the lower Indus valley, Sauvīra, Kashmir and Gandhāra

became foci of Indo-Hellenistic culture. Besides Taxila and Barbara, Sāgala, Mathurā and Minnagara were great cosmopolitan cities of India in this period.

Urban Life and Luxury

The Milindapañho, or 'Questions of Milinda', contains a glowing description of Sāgala:

'There is in the country of the Yonakas a great centre of trade, a city that is called Sāgala, situated in a delightful country, well-watered and hilly, abounding in parks, gardens, groves and lakes and tanks, a paradise of rivers and mountains and woods. Wise architects have laid it out, and its people know of no oppression, since all their enemies and adversaries have been put down. It is brave in its defence, with many and various strong towers and ramparts, with superb gates and entrance archways, and with the royal citadel in its midst, white-walled and deeply moated. Well laid out are its streets, squares, cross-roads and market places. Well displayed are the innumerable sorts of costly merchandise with which its shops are filled. It is richly adorned with hundreds of alms-halls of various kinds and splendid with hundreds of thousands of magnificent mansions, which rise aloft like the mountain-peaks of the Himālayas. Its streets are filled with elephants, horses, carriages and foot passengers, and crowded by men of all sorts and conditions—Brāhmaṇas, nobles, artificers, and servants. They resound with cries of welcome to the teachers of every creed, and the city is the resort of the leading men of each of the different sects. Shops are there for the sale of Banaras muslin, of Kotumbara stuffs, and of other cloths of various kinds; and sweet odours are exhaled from the bazaars, where all sorts of flowers and perfumes are tastefully set out. Jewels are there in plenty, and guilds of traders in all sorts of finery display their goods in the bazaars, which face all quarters of the sky'.

Two other works, Vātsyāyana's Kāmasūtra, or 'Precepts of Love', and the Mṛichchhakaṭika, or 'The Little Clay Cart', attributed to Śūdraka, fill out the picture of the age. S. N. Das Gupta places the former in the second century B.C. and the latter between the first century B.C. and the first century A.D. The Kāmasūtra gives a most vivid idea of the sophisticated urban life of the time, along with a classic definition and enumeration of erotic practices. The home of

the urban dweller, or Nāgaraka, to quote Keith, 'boasts all the luxury of the age, soft couches, a summer house in a park, beds strewn with flowers, and swings to amuse the ladies who share and lend zest to his leisure moments. Much of his time is devoted to toilet; he must bathe, be anointed, perfumed, and garlanded; then he can teach the cage birds which surround him to speak, or enjoy the brutal spectacle of ram or cock fights, both favourite amusements of the gilded youth of the period. Or, in the company of the ladies of the demi-monde, he may visit the parks outside the town, returning home crowned with the flowers which they have plucked. There are concerts to be attended, ballets and theatrical spectacles to be visited; he has a lute beside him so that he may make music when he will, and a book to read at leisure. Boon companions and hangers-on of various ranks, the Viṭas, Pīṭhamardas and Vidūṣakas of the texts are essential to his happiness, and drinking parties are not unknown, but the ideal forbids mere rude licence; even in his enjoyments the man about town aims at elegance, moderation and a measure of dignity. He condescends to the use of the vernacular, but blends it with Sanskrit, thus indicating his fine culture. Hetaerai are essential to him, but they also are not without accomplishments; indeed the Kāmasūtra demands from them knowledge encyclopaedic, including poetic taste. The most famous of them achieved great riches, as we learn from the description of the palace of the heroine in the Mṛichchhakaṭika; and, as in the Athens of Pericles, discussions on literature, music and art, must often have afforded the participants a pleasure which could not be expected from their own wives, from whom they demanded children and care for their homes'.

The Mṛichchhakaṭika, a social drama, reflects the cosmopolitan character of Ujjayinī, the city of its author. It is in many ways unique, with its swiftly moving plot and great variety of incidents and characters, some of whom are recognisable modern urban types; the play is in fact remarkably modern in spirit. Its hero, an impoverished Brāhmaṇa, represents the beau ideal of Indian manhood of the time, woven by the strands of Hindu and Buddhist thought. His sincere love for the heroine, a courtezan, by no means conflicts in that liberal age with his equally sincere conjugal love. The courtezan, true to Vātsyāyana's Precepts of Love, repulses the villain of the piece, and by her virtue and fidelity eventually wins the hero. Both are finally restored to wealth and happiness through a change in the ruling dynasty, brought about by the political intrigue which forms the sub-plot.

The Mṛichchhakaṭika is not a nāṭaka, but a prakaraṇa. The former deals with heroic or courtly life and the latter with the life of the common people. The former relies for its material on the epics and the Purāṇas, and the latter on the Bṛihatkathā. Among the social dramas in Sanskrit, the palm certainly goes to the Mṛichchhakaṭika; others of importance being the Mālatīmādhava of Bhavabhūti and the Devī-Chandraguptaṃ of Viśākhadatta.

Hellenistic and Scythian Elements in Indian Art

From the first century B.C. Indian art was vitally influenced by Romano-Greek motifs and techniques from the north-west. Indian architecture had assimilated the Persepolitan bell capital and the addorsed animals. Indian sculpture at Bhārhut and Mathurā, Bodh Gayā and Udayagiri exploited the interplay of Iranian palmettes, rosettes and honey-suckles, and the various centaurs, griffins and fanciful animals, in elegant and academically composed patterns. Such influences had penetrated through Sāñchī even to Amarāvatī (second to fourth century A.D.); but these were integrated everywhere into an art which was thoroughly original and Indian in its spirit and execution. Just as in the Mauryan age the Persepolitan pillars and bell capitals, animal carvings and decorative motifs were refashioned by the genius of the Indian craftsman and sculptor to make the Aśokan pillars some of the finest achievements of Indian monumental art, so in their turn the diffused later influences of Hellenistic Asia were thoroughly assimilated and absorbed into an Indian style which is direct, and pulsates with life. Imported art becomes cold and formal; original art is always warm, supple and expressive, and in India it reveals in its rhythm, pattern and composition the tranquillity and harmony of life as a whole. For several decades the Buddha image, a mixture of Indian sage and Greek Apollo, Māyādevī, half Indian and half Roman matron, and Kubera, a half Roman and half Indian or Scythian noble, with his consort Hāriti as a happy Roman mother, flourished of course along with Hellenistic chariot and apparel, Eros and Bacchanalian scene; but within a short period the direct and vigorous expressionism of Indian religious art asserted itself over Gandhāran Hellenism.

The statuary of the Śaka Kuṣāṇa kings, Kaniṣka, Wema Kadphises and Chaṣṭana at Mathurā, which belongs to the last quarter of the first century A.D., is characterised by a heaviness of modelling,

stiff four-square pose devoid of elasticity, and angular treatment of the drapery that betray it as Scythian rather than Hellenistic work. The Kuṣāṇa emperors and satraps imitated the Roman and Parthian practice of erecting statues of deified Caesars or mortal sovereigns. Such deification, which is entirely foreign to India, is amply indicated by the extreme rigidity and arrogance of posture of the statues, while the heavy apparel, boots and decorative borders of the cloth are Iranian-Scythian. Yet the Scythian tradition of flat linear and angular composition is later on thoroughly assimilated into the Buddha image-making, which profits from both the linearism and the stress on angles and planes, especially in the familiar triangular treatment of the seated, meditative posture of the Tathāgata.

It is somewhat curious that the interlude of Gandhāran Hellenism in the evolution of Indian art is encountered under the auspices not of the Greco-Bactrian and Parthian rulers but of the later Grecophile Śakas and Kuṣāṇas, though the Gandhāran school was quite active and prolific from the middle of the first century B.C. to the fifth century A.D. Just as it was blossoming forth into a new and unique creative phase the Hūṇa invasion gave it a death blow.

Inter-cultural Influences

What, one may ask, was the influence of Greek science and philosophy, and of Zoroastrianism, in this period of unprecedented contact between cultures on Indian soil? It is well known that the Mauryan Emperor's request for a Greek sophist to be supplied along with other gifts from the Seleucid Court was not heeded. In India Brāhmanical thought was already mature and partly systematised, and even the heresies could not make any inroads into it. The Stoic doctrine of providence or fate in contemporary Greece was not subtle enough for Indian philosophers and sophists. On the other hand, there is reference to an Indian philosopher visiting Socrates some time before 400 B.C. If this be a fact, the absolute idealism of the Upaniṣads may well have influenced Plato. More probable is the influence of the Sāṅkhya system on the science and philosophy of Pythagoras. Equally probable is the influence of the conception of the Word, or Vāk, on the doctrine of the Logos of the Stoics and Neo-Platonists. India is indebted to Greece, however, for astronomy. Her tribute to the Yavanas for this gift is warm and vivid, as is recorded in a well-known passage in the Gārgī Saṃhitā: 'The Yavanas are indeed

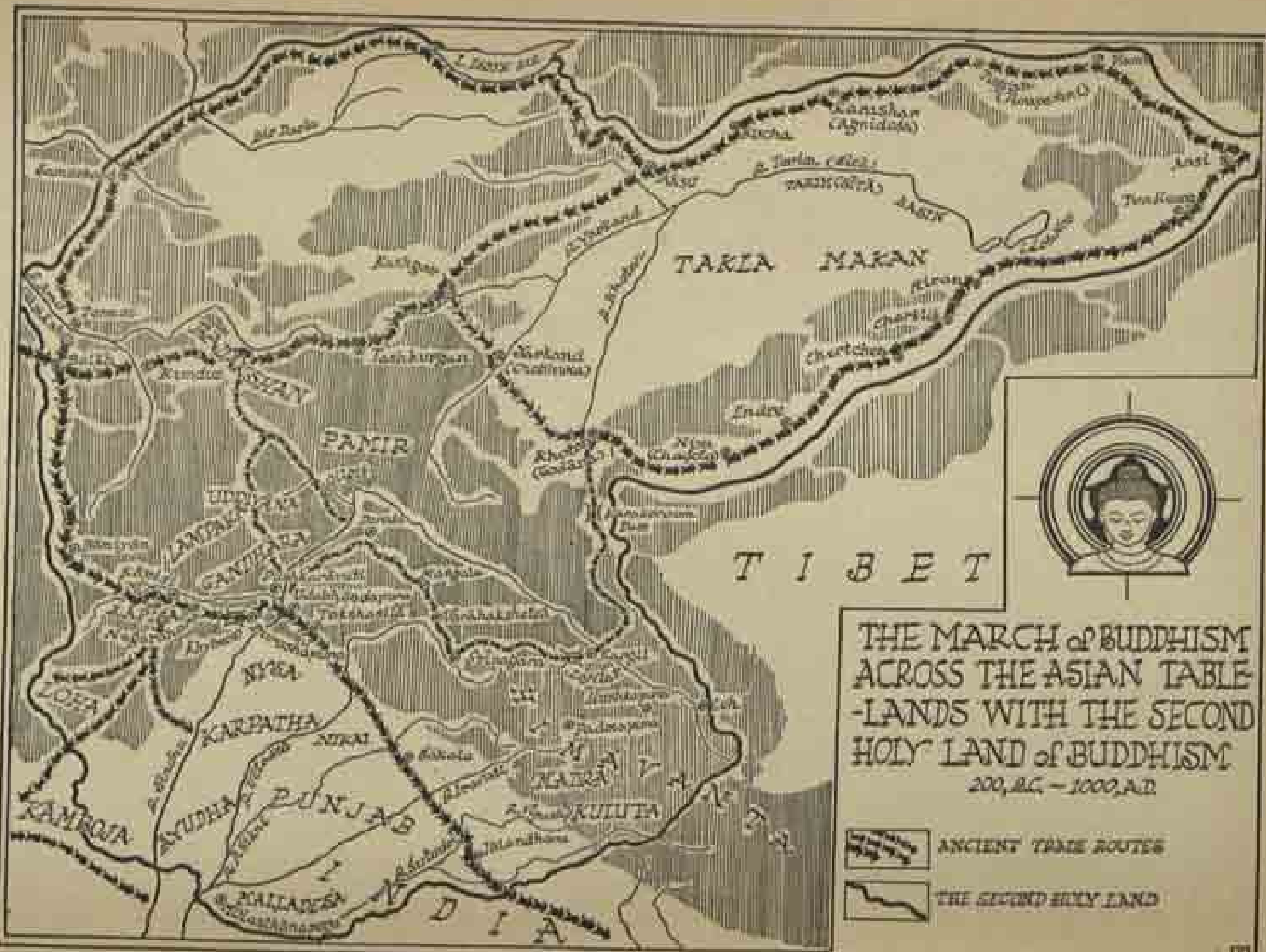
barbarians, but astronomy originated with them and for this they must be venerated as gods'. Two of the five Indian works on astronomy are derived from the West, viz., Romaka Siddhānta and Pauliśa Siddhānta (named after Paul of Alexandria, c. A.D. 378).

Clement was the first Greek philosopher to mention the Buddha, although Buddhist missionaries, known as the Therapeutaes (Theraputra) of Alexandria and the Essenes of Palestine, were familiar figures in the Eastern Mediterranean. It is to these Buddhist monks that Christianity owes certain fundamental conceptions and legends. Several Christian historians refer to the indebtedness of orthodox Christianity to Buddhism's observance of strict celibacy, relic worship, use of the rosary, and other rituals and austerities. Indian figures found at Memphis in Egypt indicate that under the Ptolemies Buddhism and Buddhist festivals were well known; while an inscription from the Thebaid is mentioned as being dedicated by Sophan the Indian. According to a Syrian legend the cult of Kṛiṣṇa-Vāsudeva was prevalent in Syria as early as the second century B.C., having come by the familiar overland trade route. Similarly in Iran the remains of a Buddhist monastery have been discovered in the Helmand basin in Seistan. There is also the little-known but significant fact that a Parthian prince gave up his throne in order to accept the life of a Buddhist monk in the second century A.D. In Seistan, Bactria and Afghanistan considerable remains of Buddhist shrines have been preserved. Seistan in particular possesses written evidence in the form of inscriptions going back as far as 100 B.C. at least. F. W. Thomas mentions that the early Uigur Turks of Central Asia developed a Buddhist literature; in Oxiana a Buddhist literature must have existed from about the commencement of the Christian era among the Kuṣāṇas and Tokharians. Such was the influence of the Buddha's name and message on the popular imagination throughout Central and Western Asia, after the Aśokan missionaries reached the Mediterranean, that several religious leaders in the West assumed the name of the Buddha. Terebinthus, for instance, declared himself to be a new Buddha, according to Archelaus (A.D. 278). The Buddha himself has been accepted as a Christian saint under the title of St. Josaphat, Prince of India. Buddhism also shaped the doctrine of Manichaeism; its founder Mani, who flourished in the third century A.D., took the name of Tathāgata and paid reverence to the Buddha or Bodhisattva. On the other hand the doctrine of incarnation in both Manichaeism and Christianity may have influenced the conception of the multiplicity of Avatāras in Vaiṣṇavism and Mahāyāna Buddhism.

Inside her own territory India was offering her various theistic faiths to the large numbers of Yavanas, Śakas and other foreigners that she was absorbing as permanent elements of her population. Christianity, a relatively new religion of the Mediterranean which had hardly risen to the status of more than a local creed, had established several churches in South India by the end of the second century A.D. More significant, however, was worship of the Sun-god which was introduced into India in a peculiar form by Zoroastrianism in the Scythian-Parthian period. The Bhājā reliefs of the second century B.C. show Sūrya with two female attendants driving a four-horsed chariot on the back of two heavily sculptured nude demons, the evil-spirits of Darkness in the Zoroastrian myth of Mithra. The figures on horseback which form the escort are foreign; they have Iranian stirrups. It is possible that here the Sun represents the Buddha as the Ruler of the Universe, indicating fusion of the Indian notion of Spiritual Chakravartī and the Zoroastrian notion of Ormazd, the Spirit of Light and Life. In the Mathurā Museum, we find the Sun-god depicted as a corpulent figure sitting on his haunches on a chariot drawn by four horses. His body is clothed and he has small wings on his shoulders in Iranian fashion. The sculpture is dated about the second century A.D. The Bhaviṣyapurāṇa definitely associates sun-worship, which the Magi priesthood brought from Śakadvīpa, with some Zoroastrian rites, and mentions Śāmba, the son of Kṛiṣṇa responsible for the introduction of this form of Sun-worship. Mūlasthāna, or Multan, is mentioned as the original and most sacred place of Sun-worship in the Purāṇas. This was also the area which came under the occupation of the Śakas. Ray Chaudhuri identifies Ptolemy's Kaspeiraioi (Kāśyapapura) with Multan. Since the Indo-Scythian period Sun-worship has found a safe though obscure corner in orthodox Hinduism.

India, Parthia, Iran, Egypt and Rome were tied together intellectually as parts of one cultural world. India freely adopted through the centuries elements of Iranian administration, Hellenistic art motifs, the Aramaean script and its derivative, the Kharoṣṭhī, Iranian and Greek words, techniques of Greco-Roman coinage and notions of Greek astronomy. On the Indian side her religion, philosophy and way of life went to the Mediterranean by the land and sea routes from Taxila and Puṣkalāvatī and Barbara and Barygaza; her ancient missionary zeal being strengthened and supported by the lure of profit from the lucrative trade with the Roman Empire in the West, and with Malaya, China, Ceylon and Indonesia in the East. And with

the scholar, the monk and the trader went forth the art of leisurely story-telling. Many ancient folk-stories of India, as embodied in the Pañchatantra and the Hitopadeśa, migrated to the Mediterranean, where the well-known Aesop, who lived at the court of Croesus of Lydia, translated them into Greek; and another Greek version attributed to Barbius appeared in the third century A.D. In a Greek comedy of the second century A.D., a shipwrecked woman finds herself on the Kanarese coast, and the local people actually speak in the Kanarese dialect in the play. More than once the chequered history of mankind has revealed periods of brisk inter-cultural contact and even understanding. The imperial age in Rome between Augustus and Nero and the foreign Greco-Bactrian and Scythian interlude in India ushered in such a favourable epoch in both India and the West.


THE MARCH of BUDDHISM ACROSS THE ASIAN TABLE-LANDS WITH THE SECOND HOLY LAND of BUDDHISM
200 B.C. – 1000 A.D.
ANCIENT TRADE ROUTES
THE SECOND HOLY LAND
TIBET
TAKLA MAKAN
PAMIR
UDDYANA
LAMPAKA
GANDHARA
NYKA
KARPATHA
PUNJAB
KAMBOJA
LOHA
AYUDHA
MALLADESA
KULUTA
INDIA
Kashgar
Tashkurgan
Yarkand
Endere
Charchan
Kanishar (Agnidesa)
Aksu
Tun Huang

CHAPTER VIII

THE SECOND REFORMATION

THE TRANSFORMATION OF BUDDHISM INTO A WORLD RELIGION

The Rise of Mahāyāna Buddhism

THE convention of the general Buddhist Council at the Kuṇḍalavana-vihāra at Jālandhara or Kāśmīra under the aegis of Mahārāja Devaputra Kaisara Kaniṣka (*c.* A.D. 78–101) was a momentous event in the history of Asian culture. This conference, attended by five hundred monks from all parts of India, was intended by Kaniṣka to clarify the Buddha's teachings, which were being divergently interpreted by the different Schools. The Council codified the Buddhist canon according to the Sarvāstivāda school and ushered in a new phase in the development of Buddhism called the Mahāyāna, which gradually spread during the next five centuries over Middle Asia, China, Mongolia, Japan and South-east Asia, including the Philippines. The term 'Yāna' means Pilgrimage, Path, or Way of Life, and the Mahāyāna literally means the 'true' or 'great' Way, or Pilgrimage of the Bodhisattvas (Bodhisattva-Yāna), who sacrifice themselves for the salvation of suffering humanity, as contrasted with the Way of the hearer or disciple working out his individual salvation or enlightenment. In Buddhist literature the term Hīnayāna or the 'little', 'low' or 'base' Way is very seldom used; it has been popularised by Chinese scholars and pilgrims. It will be appropriate, in order to appreciate adequately the development of Buddhist doctrines, to eschew the term Hīnayāna and return to the familiar terms Śrāvaka-yāna and Pratyekabuddha-yāna, which were used in the Sanskrit texts referring to the career of the Arhat. It may be recalled that there is a relief panel at Gandhāra (second to fourth century A.D.) depicting the Buddha in a goat-car, symbol of the Hīnayāna.

Buddhism and Christianity as World Faiths

The rise to prominence of the Mahāsāṅghikas, who developed the idea of the eternal Buddha and the dynamic notion of the Bodhisattvahood, and of the Sarvāstivādins, who contributed the conception of the Trikāya, or the three bodies of the Buddha, took some decades, until the Kuṇḍalavana Council crystallised these new ideas into the Mahāyāna, which represented, indeed, the victory of the Sarvāstivāda school then dominant in Kāśmira. The first steps in the evolution of Buddhism into a world-wide religion were synchronous with those that were likewise shaping a despised faith in the South-west corner of Asia, another melting pot of peoples, cultures and faiths. Christ was born in Palestine in about 4 or 5 B.C. and put to death most cruelly in the reign of Tiberius. Paul of Tarsus, the man responsible for the separation of Christianity from Judaism, preached the religion in the middle of the first century A.D. in Asia Minor, in Athens, in Corinth, and finally in Rome itself, being put to death in about A.D. 67, in the reign of Nero after the great fire in Rome. It is a strange coincidence in world history that Mahāyāna Buddhism and Christianity were both formulated as fully-fledged religions of world-wide appeal in the same period. Both stressed the law of love, thus meeting the world's need; the former in revolt against the narrow Hīnayāna ideal of the Arhat's individual salvation, and the latter against the Stoic philosophy of detachment. Due to persecution the history of Christianity faded out for the next two centuries, a period during which Mahāyāna Buddhism recorded its triumphs in country after country in Asia. Human history can hardly record a more fruitful and far-reaching humanistic movement than the spread of Mahāyāna Buddhism. Not even the propagation of Christianity brought about the peaceful, many-sided advance in civilization that was associated with the evangelising mission of the Mahāyāna, across the bleak high-lands and burning deserts of Middle Asia and the perilous Eastern seas.

Kaniṣka and the Kuṣāṇas

Kaniṣka belonged to the Kuṣāṇa section of the Yeu-chi nomads of Central Asia, who, on being displaced by the Hūṇas in about 165 B.C., entered Bactria and Gandhāra, and conquered large parts of Northern and Central India. Like their foreign predecessors or contemporaries, the Yavanas and Śakas, they too were Aryanised.

Kadphises II embraced Śaivism and styled himself Māheśvara the Saviour on his coins. His father Kadphises I was a Buddhist. Kaniṣka (Sanskrit: Kaniṣṭha) was also a Buddhist, and probably ruled from c. A.D. 78–101, over an empire that extended from Kāpiśa to the Eastern U.P. and from Kāśmira to Vidiśā. At his capital, Puruṣapura, he built a marvellous wooden tower 600 feet high to enshrine certain Buddha relics, which elicited the admiration of foreign travellers in later centuries from Hiuen Tsang to Al-Biruni. At his court assembled such worthies as Aśvaghoṣa, Charaka, Nāgārjuna, Āryadeva, Kumāralabdha and Vasumitra, who became immortal in their special fields of learning. The Emperor's liberal-mindedness is amply shown by the diversity of his coins, which honoured the Hindu, Greek, Sumerian and Zoroastrian deities that were worshipped in the various regions of his far-flung Empire. According to one account, in A.D. 90 Kaniṣka sent an army across the Pamirs to the Tarim basin to dispute the advance of the Chinese general Pan Ch'ao in that region, and encountered an ignominious defeat. Pan disappeared from the scene shortly afterwards, however, and Kaniṣka seems to have succeeded in establishing his suzerainty over the greater part of the Tarim basin, including Khotan, Yārkand and Kāshghar on the southern caravan route, and obtaining certain hostages, who were detained at Kaniṣka's capital cities, Kāpiśī and Puruṣapura. Kharoṣṭhī records recently discovered in Chinese Turkestan offer evidence of the rule of the Kuṣāṇas. It was the security of the mid-Asian caravan routes, which the Kuṣāṇa Empire was able to establish after the centuries of struggle between the Romans and Parthians and the Hūṇa migrations, that accounts for the brisk Indo-Chinese intercourse of this period, and for the spread of the Mahāyāna in Middle and East Asia.

Aśvaghoṣa, the Creator of the Classical Sanskrit Epic and Drama

The convention at Kuṇḍalavana was presided over by the distinguished Buddhist patriarch Vasumitra and was probably attended by such celebrated scholars and philosophers as Aśvaghoṣa, who was elected Vice-President, Vasumitra and Nāgārjuna. The names of Aśvaghoṣa and Nāgārjuna are famous in the Buddhist world. Aśvaghoṣa was a rare, many-sided genius, unusually versatile and creative. Winternitz characterises him as 'the most important pre-

decessor of Kālidāsa, and as the creator of epic, dramatic and lyrical composition'. He was indeed the first of India's classic poets, and perhaps wrote the earliest classical Sanskrit kāvyas, anticipating the later achievements in poetry and drama. He was also a great philosopher and linguist. He probably hailed from Ayodhyā or Pāṭaliputra and was forcibly carried off to the court of Kaniṣka. A Tibetan account mentions that he was an excellent musician who invented the rastavaṛ and travelled about the country with a choir of male and female singers, whose melancholy songs about the vanity of existence enthralled vast crowds and won them over to Buddhism. I-tsing (A.D. 671–695) speaks in superlative terms of 'Nāgārjuna, Deva (Āryadeva), and Aśvaghoṣa of bygone age', who were revered in India above gods and men. He attributes to Aśvaghoṣa authorship of the Buddhacharita, the Sūtrālaṅkāra, and many songs, which were chanted at the Buddhist sanctuaries. About the Buddhacharita, he observes that 'it is widely read or sung throughout the five divisions of India, and the countries of the Southern Sea'.

Aśvaghoṣa, the Poet of Buddha-Bhāgavatism

The Buddhacharita was the first and most outstanding epic on the life of the Buddha. It is written in the manner of Vālmīki, but is superior to the Rāmāyaṇa in its artistic design and faultless poetic style, warm and lyrical without being ornate. It gives a fine classical expression to that intense personal love and veneration for the superhuman figure of the Buddha which form the key-note of the new dispensation, the Mahāyāna. Aśvaghoṣa portrays Gautama as the super-man (Agra-pudgala) much as the Mahābhārata and the Bhagavadgītā portray Śrī Kṛiṣṇa as the divine Man (Puruṣottama). Gautama the Tathāgata has attained in the Buddhacharita the Mahāyāna, or Great Way, which has been set forth by all the Buddhas to secure the welfare of all beings (XVI, 75; 85). Absolute surrender (śaranāgati) and intense reverence (śraddhā) are offered to the exhalted figure of the Master—the great benefactor, as compassionate as a parent, the remover of dirt and stealer of sorrow from the seekers of the refuge (śokasya hartā śaraṇāgatānāṃ). Not only in Aśvaghoṣa's Buddhacharita but also in his other works, the Sūtrālaṅkāra and the Mahāyānaśraddhotpāda, bhakti, the dominant note of the Mahāyāna, was in this manner most poetically and vividly expressed.

In his Saundarananda, where he describes himself in the role of Arhat Nanda separating himself from his handsome wife, Sundarī, the poet achieves a marvellous delicacy and elegance not to be found even in the Buddhacharita. Though a monk, as a true Indian poet he is familiar with Vātsyāyana's Kāmasūtra. 'By their guiles, display, gait, grace, smiles, feigning of anger, infatuation and pleasant voices women have captivated the body of divine and royal seers.' Two of his delightful descriptions of women follow. In the Buddhacharita 'the women of the city rush to see Prince Gautama as he goes out, to have a glimpse of him from the house-tops and the windows'. 'Hampered by their falling girdles, they scamper up in the greatest haste, pushing and jostling one another, and scaring away the birds on the roofs with the clattering of their girdles and rings. The lotus faces of the fair ones, leaning out of the windows, make it seem as though the walls of the houses were decorated with real lotus blossoms'. The second describes a sleeping beauty: 'And one lay resplendent, holding a flute in her hand, while her white garment slips from her bosom, like unto a river whose banks laugh with foam of her waves, and in whose lotuses long rows of bees delight'.

The poet is direct and simple when he deals with a situation of pathos. 'With deep longing and many a pain did she bear me in her womb; all her effort hath come to nought; why was she mother, why was I her son?' And when he deals with the eternal verities his simplicity and delicacy do not leave him. Most elegantly does Gautama's charioteer explain to the Prince the onslaught of age when they encounter on the road a grey-haired old man who is bent over his staff, and whose limbs tremble. The Prince asks: 'Is it a process of Nature, or the sport of destiny?' The charioteer replies:

"It is age which has broken him,—Age,
The thief of beauty and destroyer of strength,
The source of care and the end of joys,
The foe of the senses, the vanishing of memories.
He, too, has sucked at the mother's breast
As a little child, learned walking in the course of time,
Gradually he grew big and strong, a youth,
Gradually age has overtaken him.'

Aśvaghoṣa's description of the spiritual seer, or Guru, is classic: 'A man's eyes may be closed but he alone can see among people with

eyes open. Though a man has eyes, yet he cannot see unless he has the eyes of wisdom'. The poet is unquestionably at his best when he deals with the theme of adoration for the Great Seer (Maharṣi), or the Great Compassionate One (Mahākāruṇika).

Here, finally, is the poet's graceful portrayal of the Bodhisattva ideal, which played such an important role in the Mahāyāna doctrine: 'He is considered the highest person in the world who, after attaining the highest and final state of things, desires, heedless of his own toil, to teach his fellow-men how to obtain tranquillity. Leaving aside, therefore, thy own work, take up those of steady character, work for the well-being of your fellow-men, and hold up the lamp of wisdom in the darkness of night to creatures who are wandering, enveloped in darkness'. These words are put into the mouth of the Buddha when he speaks to Nanda in the Saundarananda.

Aśvaghoṣa was also the author of the drama called Sāriputra-Prakaraṇa, in which he deals with the beautiful episode of the conversion of Sāriputra and Maudgalyāyana, two of the Buddha's most distinguished disciples. In addition he is credited by many modern scholars, as well as by Chinese authors, with two other famous Mahāyāna works, the Sūtrālaṅkāra and the Śraddhotpādaśāstra. The former is sometimes attributed to Aśvaghoṣa's younger contemporary, Kumāralāta; only fragments of the work survive. The latter is regarded by Suzuki as of paramount importance, being the first attempt to systemise the fundamental ideas of Mahāyāna Buddhism, besides representing one of the main authorities for all Mahāyāna schools. It was Aśvaghoṣa's poetic treatment of the Buddha's love that helped in no small measure to usher in the efflorescence of Gandhāran art and Mahāyāna absolute idealism.

The Influence of the Trio, Aśvaghoṣa, Nāgārjuna and Āryadeva, on Gandhāran Art

Two other distinguished philosophers, Nāgārjuna and Āryadeva, are generally associated with the rise of the Mahāyāna. Both Hiuen-Tsang and I-tsing refer to them. According to the former Aśvaghoṣa, Nāgārjuna, Āryadeva and Kumāralabdha (Kumāralāta) were contemporaries; he called them 'the four suns which illumined the world'. There is much uncertainty about the life and works of Nāgārjuna, who is sometimes confused with the famous alchemist and Tāntrika teacher. He was born in Vidarbha and was extremely

learned in the Brāhmanical Śāstras. It was he who formulated the doctrine of the void or suchness (śūnya or tathatā) in his famous Mādhyamika-śāstra, which has won him a lasting place in world philosophy. In the same work he also distinguished between two truths, the conventional truth and the highest truth, without which it is not possible to understand either the void or Nirvāṇa, which are matters not of intellectual grasp but of intuitive wisdom (Prajñā). Other important works attributed to Nāgārjuna are the Śatasāhasrikaprajñāpāramitā, the Daśabhūmi-vibhāṣā-śāstra, and the Suhṛillekha. I-tsing speaks in high terms of the last work and observes that in his day it was widely read and memorised in India. Nāgārjuna later became head of the University of Nālandā, and was succeeded there by his famous disciple Āryadeva, who was of Sinhalese origin. Āryadeva preached Buddhism for sometime in Prayāga, where he showed great courage in condemning the superstition of the multitude thronging to bathe in the river. His most famous work is Chatuḥ-Śataka. According to Winternitz 'down to the present day, Nāgārjuna's Mādhyamika Śāstra, together with Āryadeva's Chatuḥ-Śataka or Śata-Śāstra, and the Dvādaśa-nikāya Śāstra, form the groundwork of the faith of the Sanron sect in Japan'. All through the works of the famous trio, Aśvaghoṣa, Nāgārjuna and Āryadeva, the early patriarchs of the Mahāyāna, worship of the Buddha and absolute surrender (śaraṇāgati) for him are ardently expressed, along with the various metaphysical doctrines, as the key-notes of the new system of faith.

At the same time as the life and career of the Compassionate One were being depicted in the Buddhacharita and the Lalitavistara (composed sometime in the second century A.D. and translated into Chinese in A.D. 308) the Greco-Buddhist art of Gandhāra reached its peak, having begun just before the birth of Christ and perfected its style in the reign of Kaniṣka and shortly afterwards, in the second century A.D. The composition of the early Mahāyāna texts and the culmination of Greco-Buddhist art in Gandhāra and Mathurā—flowers of the northern garden of Buddha Bhāgavatism—were thus synchronous; and there is no doubt that the propagation of the Mahāyāna school was enormously aided by the artists' work. The superb relic tower built by Kaniṣka at Puruṣapura, which excited the wonder of succeeding centuries, is evidence of the role of Gandhāran art in spreading the new dispensation, facilitated both by the increasing devotion to Buddha worship and the anthropomorphic representation of the figures of Buddha Śākyamuni and the seven

past Buddhas, as well as the Great Compassionate Ones—the Bodhisattvas—Avalokiteśvara, Mañjuśrī, Vajrapāṇi and Maitreya.

Mahāyāna and the Cosmopolitan Kuṣāṇas

The origin and spread of the Mahāyāna can be adequately understood only against the intellectual and social background of the time—the metaphysical movements in Kṛiṣṇa-Bhāgavatism and in the Mahāsāṅghika and Sarvāstivāda Buddhist sects, and the social changes brought about in Northern India by the assimilation over well-nigh four centuries of Greeks, Parthians and Śakas who adopted the Indian religions but maintained intimate connections with Western and Central Asia, especially in the fluid urban-mercantile and cosmopolitan epoch of the Imperial Kuṣāṇas. According to the Aṣṭasāhasrika-Prajñāpāramitā, one of the earliest Mahāyāna texts, it is observed that the Mahāyāna teaching would originate in Dakṣiṇāpatha (South India), pass to eastern countries, and prosper in the north. And it was in the north, from Kāpiśa to Mathurā, under the Imperial Kuṣāṇas, that time and place were entirely favourable to a widespread evangelical enterprise, 'a Saṅgha of the Four Directions', with constant intercourse through out-going monks, scholars, artists and merchants, and incoming pilgrims, traders and travellers. There, under the impact of diverse races, peoples and faiths, early Buddhism gradually evolved into a world faith.

The cosmopolitan character of the Kuṣāṇa Empire is symbolised by the quadruple nature of Kaniṣka's imperial titles, the 'Mahārāja' of India, the 'Devaputra' of China, the 'Shaonano Shao' of Iran, and the 'Kaisara' (Caesar) of Hellenistic Asia. The religious eclecticism of the age is remarkably illustrated by the large number of gods and goddesses of different faiths that we find inscribed on the various Kuṣāṇa coins; Brāhmanical, Buddhist, Zoroastrian, Elamite, Sumerian, Greek and Roman deities are all represented. The pantheon includes the following: Babylonian deities: Nana or Nanaia (the principal goddess of Uruk; Indian Nanā), and Hero (Hera, the principal goddess of Syria). Greek and Roman deities: Manaobago (Minerva), Arooaspo (Ares), Herakilo (Herakles or Hercules), Helios (sun god), Selene (moon goddess), and Riom (Rome). Iranian deities: Mozdooano (Mazda), Orlagno (Verethraghna), Mithro (Mithras or Mithra; Vedic Mitra, sun), Miiro (Mihira or sun god), Mao (Mah or moon god), Oanindo (Vorainti), Athsho (Atash or Agni, fire god),

Pharro (Farr, fire god), Shaoreoro (Shahrevar), and Ardokhsho (Ardibahisht or Ashavahishta). Hindū deities: Śiva (Maheśvara and Nandī), Oesho (Īśa), Ommo (Umā), Orlagno (Vṛitrahan), Mithra (Mitra), Oron (Varuṇa), Oado (Vāta or Vāyu), Sarapis (Yama), Skando Komaro Bizago (Skanda Kumāra Viśākha), Bizago (Viśākha), Maaceno (Mahāsena or Kārttikeya) and Gaṇeśa (mentioned only by name). Finally, Buddhist deities: Boddo (Buddha), and Oduobou Sakamano (Advaya-Buddha Śākyamuni). Before the less civilized foreigners came under the spell of Mahāyāna Buddhism, many were the theistic cults of Hinduism that appealed to them more than its monism (advaitavāda): the worship of Vāsudeva Kṛiṣṇa and Arjuna, Śiva, Skanda and Viśākha (mentioned by Pāṇini and Patañjali), and Mihira or Āditya (worshipped at Multan and Kashmir).

It was the doctrinal development in Buddhism that widened its appeal so enormously. Metaphysically, Mahāyāna emphasis on One Mind, in contrast to Hīnayāna realism, suited the status of a world religion. Socially, its emphasis on the self-forgetful pāramitās of the Bodhisattva rather than on the negative, self-centred restricted virtues of the Arhat fulfilled the needs of a wealthy, expanding, heterogeneous empire. Ethically, the hope and promise of the Mahāyāna, 'Buddha ye shall become', that all sentient beings, 'as numerous as the sands of the Ganges', even those who are low, ignorant and wicked, shall become Buddhas and win their way to a universal nirvāṇa through the mahākaruṇā which moves the Leader of the Caravan, were altogether congruent with the liberalism, optimism and striving of the Kuṣāṇa age.

The Doctrinal Transformation of the Simple Primitive Creed into a World Faith

The differences between the Hīnayāna and the Mahāyāna are largely matters of emphasis. The dominant ideas of the Mahāyāna are found in the Pāli Nikāyas; but a whole age and a different social and intellectual climate separate them. Stcherbatsky aptly pointed out: 'The history of religions has scarcely witnessed such a break between new and old within the pale of what nevertheless continues to claim common descent from the same religious founder'. In comparing the Mahāyāna with the Hīnayāna, and also with Hindu Bhāgavatism, the following points of difference may be briefly indicated:

(1) In the Hīnayāna, the Buddha is a historical figure, Gautama Śākyamuni. In the Mahāyāna he becomes metaphysical—eternal and absolute. Such a reformation seems to occur in all philosophical religions, or in religions that are adopted by people with a metaphysical bent of mind, and it has been marked in Brāhmanism, Buddhism and Christianity alike. In Brāhmanism the parallel movement is associated with the development of the Kṛiṣṇa-Vāsudeva cult. Kṛiṣṇa, the friend and teacher of the Pāṇḍavas and leader of the Vṛiṣṇi clan, is idealised and apotheosised, metamorphosed into the metaphysical and religious figure of Vāsudeva-Viṣṇu. In Buddhism the Mahāsāṅghika sect contributed notably to the development of the notion of the metaphysical Buddha.

(2) Side by side with the above doctrinal change stress is laid on veneration, grace (karuṇā), and śaraṇāgati. The parallel development in Brāhmanism may be found in the entire Pāñcharātra literature and the Bhagavadgītā, in which single-minded devotion to Kṛiṣṇa alone, without reference to, or even with the abjuration of, any other Dharma, is held to lead to ultimate salvation. For several centuries the foreigners that were being Aryanised found their satisfaction more in the śaraṇāgati of both Kṛiṣṇa and Buddha Bhāgavatism than in the Indian philosophical and ethical doctrines. The Bhagavadgītā and the Saddharmapuṇḍarīka or the Lotus of the True Law (the latter was composed at the beginning of the third century A.D. and translated into Chinese A.D. 265–316) are the respective gospels of Kṛiṣṇa and Buddha Bhāgavatism, and both are equally saturated with bhakti as well as metaphysical idealism. Both expound that in spiritual life faith (śraddhā) comes before knowledge. The Gītā says: 'He who has faith, perseverance in his quest and mastery over the senses gains knowledge and quickly attains the supreme peace'. The Puṇḍarīka similarly asserts: 'It is not only by reasoning that the Law is to be found; it is beyond the pale of reasoning, and must be learned from the Tathāgata'. Such Mahāyāna works as the Saddharmapuṇḍarīka and Mahāyāna Śraddhotpāda, which have given inspiration to millions of Buddhists in China, Japan and Southern Asia, bear the distinct impress of the Bhagavadgītā; just as the adoration of the Buddha's footprints in Gandhāra, Amarāvatī or Borobodur stems from the worship of Viṣṇu-pāda in Bhāgavatism.

(3) Another feature of the Mahāyāna that distinguishes it from the Hīnayāna is the doctrine of Trikāya, the Three Bodies or Manifestations of the Buddha: (a) The Dharmakāya, or Essence, or Ideal Nature, undivided and common to all the Buddhas. This is the

Absolute, the Transcendental or the Tathatā; (b) The Sambhogakāya, or the manifestation of Bliss, which varies according to the planes of the different Buddhas. This is the superhuman body of the Buddha, enjoying his bliss, wisdom and glory, as it is manifest in saints in heaven, Gods or Īśvara; (c) The Nirmāṇakāya, or the loving and serving human Buddhas, his incarnations. These are the human bodies of the Absolute, as it is manifest in imperfect beings. In the Trikāya doctrine again we see a metaphysical position similar to that of Bhāgavatism, the Dharmakāya corresponding to the Brahman, non-dual, eternal and unconditioned, the Sambhogakāya corresponding to the Lord or Īśvara, and the Nirmāṇakāya corresponding to every individual soul, or the Avatāra immanent in every human being. But Mahāyāna theism as embodied in the Saddharmapuṇḍarīka emphasises that it is only in appearance that there are three Manifestations by means of which nirvāṇa can be attained, viz., that of the human being, that of the Pratyeka Buddha, and that of the Bodhisattva. It is only through the transcendental, supra-human compassion (mahākaruṇā) of the Buddha that all of them, as many as there are grains of sand in the river Ganges, alike attain enlightenment and become Buddhas. Hinduism, Jainism, Christianity, Nestorianism, Mazdeism and Manichaeism have all probably contributed to the formulation of the Mahāyāna Buddhist theory of Trikāya, which sought to clarify the relations between the Buddha-state and the world; and all have probably stimulated the associated religious zeal for relief of the world's sorrow, and the belief that the divine grace of the Buddha and the Bodhisattvas is shed on all humanity. The Mahāyāna Trikāya dogma subtly integrates the notions of transcendence, incarnation and divine grace and underlies the dynamic ideal of the Bodhisattva, bending compassionately over the pain and suffering of humanity, and directing it towards the Absolute.

(4) The Mahāyāna conceives of an infinite number of Bodhisattvas, all of whom have taken the vow of attaining omniscience and of saving all sentient creatures; according to the Hīnayāna there is only one Bodhisattva, Gautama Śākyamuni. It is the incarnations of the many compassionate Bodhisattvas, Padmapāṇi Avalokiteśvara, Mañjuśrī, Bhaiṣajyarāja and others, and the birth legends embodied in such a work as Āryaśūra's Jātaka-mālā, written some time in the third century A.D. in the elegant Kāvya style, that have provided the inspiration of Asian art through the centuries. The famous twenty-fifth chapter of the Saddharmapuṇḍarīka, devoted to praise of the

Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara, mentions as many as thirty-two bodies used by him for the sake of serving humanity, and for the sake of the merit to be acquired by adoring him. This development is of great importance in the evolution of both religion and art in the East. The Mahāsāṅghika sect originally introduced the word Bodhisattva-yāna, and it was only later changed to Mahāyāna. With this shift of contemplative focus from the Buddha to the Bodhisattva, Buddhist art entered its golden age, importing dynamic spiritual, even supernatural, attributes into the formal and frozen cult image.

(5) By the early centuries of the Christian era the doctrine of incarnation, or avatāra, had emerged in more than one religion; but it obtained its most sublime symbolic expression in the Mahāyāna. The notion of incarnation was popularised for Bhāgavatism in the Mahābhārata and the Bhagavadgītā. In the second and first centuries B.C. we find the Pāñcharātra doctrine of the vyūha underlying the worship of three Manifestations of the Supreme—Vāsudeva, Saṅkarṣaṇa and Pradyumna. It appears that the Aryanised foreigners were attracted to the worship of God according to the three-fold or quadruple arrangement based on the state of consciousness. The worship of the four vyūhas along with that of Kriṣṇa-Vāsudeva is well-nigh five or six centuries old. The epic conception of Viṣṇu's avatāra then arose in order to rescue a disordered, unrighteous world. In Zoroastrianism there is the doctrine of the incarnations of Verethraghna, who is sometimes identified with Vṛitraghna or Indra. In Christianity there developed the Docetic heresy, a belief in celestial incarnation. The Kuṣāṇa Empire, especially in its north-western fringe, contained large numbers of foreigners embracing different faiths and creeds. There is little doubt that Mahāyāna Buddhism was influenced by the avatāra idea current at the time in both India and the West, and gave a profoundly meaningful interpretation to the innumerable incarnations of the primordial or cosmic Buddha, for the alleviation of the world's sorrow. In the Hīnayāna we certainly encounter the idea of past Buddhas, some of whom were venerated in the stūpas of the third century B.C.; but the conception of future Buddhas, and the Messianic promise of the Puṇḍarīka, belong exclusively to the Mahāyāna. In spite of the multiplicity of incarnations posited by Bhāgavatism, Śaivism and Devī-ism, they contain no hint of the grand Mahāyāna conception of incarnation, in which the innumerable incarnations of the Buddha, past, present, and future, move in a mysterious field (kṣetra) beyond comprehension, 'sometimes as an ignorant being, sometimes as a holy man, sometimes

in the midst of saṃsāra and sometimes in the state of nirvāṇa, teaching one truth and revealing all the worlds in one spot' (Avataṃśaka-sūtra).

(6) The Mahāyāna stresses the ideal of the layman and the Bodhisattva rather than that of the monk or Arhat. The world becomes in the Mahāyāna a veritable heaven for the Bodhisattva's spiritual illumination, unselfish teaching and compassion to his fellow-men, including the sinners, debauchees and outcasts. Nirvāṇa is realised when the root of the evil passions is removed. Thus 'Nirvāṇa becomes Saṃsāra and Saṃsāra becomes Nirvāṇa'. In Tathatā both Saṃsāra and Nirvāṇa find their true roles. Nirvāṇa in the Mahāyāna is an Eternal Becoming rather than a definite episode reached after death, as in the Hīnayāna. Emphasis shifted from the homelessness and asceticism of the original creed to the practical and altruistic life of man in the community, in which the individual emulates the great compassion and self-forgetfulness of the Bodhisattvas. The new ideology no longer identified society with man's desires and woes but with his nirvāṇa—the haven of earthly potential Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. The phenomenal world was still regarded as ephemeral and illusory, but man's new goal was the abolition of individuality and the interpenetration of self with non-self. Spiritual beatitude replaced the negative aim of cessation of suffering, and the eminently social virtues of compassion and altruism obtained a profound metaphysical basis.

(7) Above all, in the Mahāyāna, in contrast to the Hīnayāna, there was the stress on universal Nirvāṇa; grounded in the concept of the universal mind; this gives birth to a unique moral code of universal compassion to all sentient beings. The entire system of Hīnayāna and Pāramis is now oriented to the new Pāramitās, and the goal is not only the removal of the world's sorrow and suffering but also the establishment of a world fraternity; a view of life that enthralled the imagination of the foreigners, the Bactrian Greeks, Iranians, Yue-chis, Khotanese and Chinese, from the first to the seventh century A.D. In the Avataṃśaka-sūtra, or the Garland of Flowers, one of the most subtle and profound religious scriptures of the world, we read: 'The Bodhisattva's great compassion is awakened in ten ways: when he sees beings without refuge; when he sees them led into a wicked way; when he observes them poor and without a stock of merit; when he sees them sleeping in the midst of saṃsāra; when he sees them practising evil; when he sees them bound by desire; when he sees them drowning in the ocean of saṃsāra; when he sees them suffering

incurable diseases; when he sees them showing no ambition to do good; and when he sees them straying completely from the Dharma of all Buddhas'. Great compassion and a great pitying heart is called Buddha-nature. Compassion is Tathāgata; Tathāgata is compassion. This emotional abundance did not occur in the same measure either in the original Buddhism or in Hinduism. In Mahāyāna Buddhism, compassion became the essence of the new interpretation, giving it a momentous impetus which carried it beyond mountains, deserts and seas to distant lands and peoples.

The Influence of the Kuṣāṇa Renaissance on Middle Asia

The Kuṣāṇa Empire, which maintained its power in Uttarāpatha for at least three centuries, from Kujula Kadphises (A.D. 15 to 65) to Vāsudeva and his successors (middle of the fourth century A.D.), controlled in all probability both the northern and southern caravan routes, and certainly the latter, established intimate trade contacts with Central Asia, China, Asia Minor, Egypt, Greece and Rome, and welcomed and assimilated Hellenistic, Semitic, Iranian and Chinese currents of culture. Through the zeal and devotion of Aśoka and the religious opportunism of the Greco-Bactrians in earlier centuries, Kāpiśa, Gandhāra and Kāśmīra were full of Buddhist stūpas and monasteries. Kaniṣka whom Hiuen-Tsang describes as a new convert to Buddhism, must have emulated Aśoka in the propagation of the faith beyond his Empire. In about *c.*160 B.C. Buddhism made its first appearance in Khotan, and in about A.D. 65 Dharmaratna and Kaśyapa Mātaṅga introduced it into China, where they translated five short suttas. In the second and third centuries A.D. a number of Yue-chi monks went on a proselytising mission to China. Among them was Dharmarakṣa (A.D. 284), who remained there for thirty years translating 211 Sanskrit texts into Chinese. Kāśmīra was then the most important seat of Buddhist learning in Northern India and the home of the Sarvāstivāda school; Jālandhara and Pravarapura were its most ancient and famous monasteries. To these and other flourishing centres of learning in Kāśmīra came scholars from Kucha, Khotan, Kashghar and Yarkhand to learn about Buddhism. Soon the great monastery of Gomatī-Vihāra arose in Khotan, attracting pilgrims from all over Central Asia and China, and also the Nava-Saṅghārāma in Bactriana or Balkh, the confluence of the ancient caravan routes. This was before the rise of Nālandā as the centre of Buddhist studies

in the East. If the Roman Empire gave peace to the West for two centuries (44 B.C. to A.D. 167), the contemporary and equally extensive Kuṣāṇa Empire, which embraced the Hindu Kush and the Tarim basin in the north and the Ganges valley in the east, was responsible for peace and prosperity for more than three centuries, in a vast region that was then the world's melting-pot of cultures.

The Kuṣāṇa age is one of the peaceful, prosperous and dynamic epochs in Indian history, characterised by intense political, intellectual, religious and artistic activity. It was a time that witnessed a great intellectual renaissance, represented by such giants as Aśvaghoṣa, Charaka, Nāgārjuna, Pārśva, Vasumitra, Saṅgharakṣa, Kumāralāta and Āryaśūra. It saw the construction of hundreds of stūpas and monasteries, including the celebrated stūpa of Puruṣapura, built by the Greek engineer Ageselaus. It witnessed a new sophistication and growth of luxury and fashion in many cities in the north, Kāpiśa, Kucha, Nagarahāra, Taxila and Mathurā, due to intimate contact with the Roman world, as is evident from the discovery of various types of Syrian glassware, Chinese lacquered boxes found at Begram (ancient Kāpiśa), and the elaborate coiffures and fashions of the hetaera type of woman in some of the Gandhāran sculptures. It experienced an intense popular religious upsurge, associated with the worship of a variety of divinities, Bodhisattva, Śiva, Kriṣṇa-Vāsudeva, Kārttikeya, Kubera and Mihira. It saw the introduction and spread of the Indian Prākṛit dialect and Brāhmī and Kharoṣṭhī scripts in the Tarim basin; these, together with Buddhism and the worship of such Hindu divinities as Śiva, Kubera and Gaṇeśa, were welding together divergent semi-barbarous nomads, who were adopting Indian names, following Indian methods of administration, and developing an extensive Kuchean and Tokharian literature of their own, based on Sanskrit. It was a time of diplomatic foreign missions and alliances. It saw the Parthian Prince Lokottama converted to Buddhism and translating Buddhist texts into Sanskrit. It also witnessed the first Indian mission, that of Dharmaratna and Kaśyapa Mātaṅga, to the Chinese capital, where a group of admirers listened to their teaching at the newly founded White Horse Monastery. It was in this age of the Kuṣāṇas that the constant movement of Buddhist scholars and travellers between Kāśmira, Uḍḍiyāna, Kāpiśa and Bamiyan on the one hand, and Khotan, Kucha and Kashgar on the other, Aryanised the Tarim basin and made it the spring-board of Indian cultural expansion to the East in later decades. The Indian colonies, temples and monasteries of Khotan

and Kucha paved the way for the expansion of Indian civilization in East Asia, although the mission of the first and most outstanding translator of the Mahāyāna texts into Chinese, Kumārajīva (A.D. 383 to 413), did not begin until about a century and a half after the Kuṣāṇa Emperor Vāsudeva II sent his embassy to China (A.D. 230). By the end of the third century A.D. as many as 186 Buddhist monasteries had been erected, and there were as many as 3,700 Indian monks in China.

The Second Holy Land of Buddhism

From the first appearance of the Greco-Bactrians in Kāpiśa and Gandhāra at the beginning of the second century B.C. to the invasion of the Ephthalite Huns in about 450 A.D., a period of well-nigh six centuries, a whole host of stūpas, chapels and monasteries with images of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas were constructed in the region, converting it into a veritable second Buddhist holy land, as a counterpart to the ancient holy land of Gautama Śākyamuni in Magadha. Many sacred relics found their way there from the holy land of the Ganges, and were enshrined in stūpas built in order to bring health, peace and honour to the princes and peoples of the land. Legends were created concerning the transport of the Buddha himself to this region to work miracles; and certain north-western sites came to be associated with famous episodes in the lives of the Bodhisattva. It was in Gandhāra and Mathurā that the first Buddha images were constructed. In the north-west they were at first Apollonian, and their elegance is sophisticated and insipid, Hellenistic and Roman in aesthetic ideal and treatment. At Mathurā on the other hand, the Buddha images were modelled after the style of the ancient ascetic figures in the neighbourhood including the Parkham Yakṣas, and at their best show a marvellous blend of grace and serenity, delicacy and poise. The execution of the Buddha image indeed ushered in the golden age of Mathurā sculpture. Both Gandhāra and Mathurā workshops sculptured hundreds of Buddha figures, as well as episodes in the life of the Bodhisattva, in stūpas and monasteries commemorating the most important Yakṣas. Gradually the piety and poise of the Mathurā images subordinated the Hellenistic elements of form and decoration of Gandhāra. Yet the Hellenistic school contributed the well-nigh ubiquitous diaphanous robe to the rendering of the Buddha figure throughout Northern India.

The Gothico-Buddhist Art of the North-west

Within a few decades this Indianised Gandhāran sculpture blossomed forth into what Grousset has called a magnificent Gothic phase, encountered especially at the sites of ancient Nagarahāra, Hadda and Taxila. This Gothico-Buddhist art of the Kabul valley, characteristic of the third century onwards, is the highest testimony at once to the superbly successful assimilation of Greco-Roman, Iranian and Indian traditions and techniques and to the spiritual creativeness of the human spirit. Brother to the Romano-Syrian and Palmyrian art of the same period and successor to the Greco-Roman of Kabul and the Punjab, it starts from new bases and opens a new cycle. The French writer describes it with great enthusiasm: 'The head of some solemn and bearded ascetic almost recalls our "Beau Dieu" of Amiens; some of the heads of "barbarians" might remind us of the saints on the north-west door of Rheims. Certain heads in the army of Māra treated grotesquely are akin, not to Greek art, but to the contorted, caricaturist demons of our Hells, the decorative heads and gargoyles of the thirteenth century. Other bearded demon heads might suggest some "King David". On certain diminutive heads of monks in stucco we see again the witty, sharp, "smile of Rheims". And that again is almost an angel of Rheims, emerging with no transition stage from the Greco-Roman divinity, that tall figure carrying flowers in a fold of its garment to throw in the footsteps of Buddha'. The remarkable resemblance between the head of the Brāhmaṇa ascetic at Hadda and the famous Beau Dieu of the Cathedral at Amiens, and between the stucco head of the Devatā, now in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and many a figure at Chartres is not difficult to explain. A millennium may separate the Kuṣāṇa age from the Golden Age of European cathedral sculpture, but the same new emphasis on human tenderness and the expression of inner force and tension rather than classical unity and poise that the mystical movements of both Mahāyāna Buddhism and Christianity demanded, produced a fresh, lively humanistic style. The human figures received, whether in Gandhāra or in north France, distinctive lineaments embodying all the nuances of the mental attitudes through which the Bodhisattva or the Christian saint was supposed to be passing.

Mahāyāna mysticism had the same effect on the formal conventions of Greco-Roman art in the production of Gothic as Latin Christianity had in the West, but a thousand years earlier—'un-

doubtedly by no means the less curious of the adventures of the human mind'. It was Hūṇa iconoclasm that extinguished this radiant glow of human genius just as it had begun to shine, and to brighten the art of Central Asia and China, to which it was being carried by hundreds of monks and artists through Bamiyan, Kāpiśa and Nagarahāra, across the snows of the Hindukush. The conquest and devastation brought by Toramāṇa and his son Mihirakula as the fifth century was drawing to its close inflicted one of the major tragedies in the history of the world's art and culture.

CHAPTER IX

THE CLASSIC PERFECTION AND SPLENDOUR OF THE GUPTA RENAISSANCE

The Centuries of Peace

THE Kuṣāṇa Empire, as we have seen, gave peace to India and her north-western borderlands for at least three centuries during an epoch in world history in which the Roman Empire gave peace to the West; and it nurtured the expansion of primitive Buddhism into a world-wide religion. After the Mauryan advance the Kuṣāṇas opened the gates for the expansion of Indian civilization through the Uttarāpatha to Western, Middle and Eastern Asia. But India's frontiers along the banks of the Oxus and the Kabul were vulnerable. The White Hūṇas, or Ephthalites, dominated Central Asia from 407 to 553; they occupied Bactria (425), and after being defeated by Sassanid Bahram Gor (428) seized Gandhāra. Their signal victory over Sassanid Peroz (484) freed them for raids from the Punjab into Hindustan, which completely destroyed the Kuṣāṇa civilization. The Hūṇa invasion of Hindustan began not later than the reign of Skandagupta Vikramāditya (A.D. 455–467). Meanwhile the Scythians, now Aryanised, established and increased their power in Western India under their various satraps. It is probable that some other foreigners came into the fluid Indian scene in this epoch, viz., the Sassanians, who held sway over greater Śakasthāna in India until about A.D. 390–400, when these territories, comprising Sind, Kathiawar, Gujarat and Malwa, were reconquered by Chandragupta II Vikramāditya. An inscription in Pahlavi of the reign of Shapur II (310–379) found in Persepolis refers to the Sassanian governor of Śakasthāna as the Śakānsāh as well as the Dabirān Dabir of Hind (India) Śakasthāna and Tukharistan. Kālidāsa's reference to the bearded Pārasikas encountered by Raghu on his Western march by the land-route from Aparānta is noteworthy in this connection. The Nāgas of the Yamunā valley drove the northern Scythians towards

the north-western borderlands of India. With such danger from foreigners Indian culture was at a low ebb. But the Gupta Empire, the successor after about five centuries of the Mauryan Empire, then arose in the Ganges Valley, with its capital in the ancient city of Pāṭaliputra.

In its heyday the Gupta Empire (A.D. 320–535) extended from the Arabian Sea to the Bay of Bengal and obtained allegiance from the Śaka and Kuṣāṇa rulers of West and North-west India up to the Bālhīka region (Balkh), and also from the kings of Ceylon and 'all the islands' comprising Dvīpāntara Bhārata, or the Indian colonies of the eastern seas. Yet this mighty empire reeled for some time under the blows of the advancing Hūṇas. Skandagupta (455–467) won a memorable victory over them in about A.D. 456, which has been extolled in the legend of Vikramāditya, narrated by Somadeva in the Kathāsaritsāgara. The Bhitari pillar inscription refers to this in grand kāvya style. The favourite of the goddess of fortune and splendour of the Imperial Guptas was shaken and convulsed by his enemies. But after the battle, 'exclaiming "the victory is won", he betook himself, like Kṛiṣṇa after slaying his enemies, to his mother Devakī, whose eyes were filled with tears of joy'. Skandagupta's victory was epoch-making, and came five years after the defeat of the savage Hūṇa leader Attila by the Romans and Goths at the battle of Chalons (A.D. 451), which postponed the end of the Roman Empire in the West by a quarter of a century (A.D. 476) The Hūṇas after consolidating their empire, which extended from Persia and Khotan to the Punjab and Malwa, tried again under the tyrant Mihirakula to penetrate into the Ganges Valley, but were again signally defeated, by a confederacy of princes headed by Yaśodharman (A.D. 533). Settled and Indianised in the upper Punjab, with some branches penetrating as far as Chitrakūṭa and Airikiṇa pradeśa (Eran in Madhya Pradeśa), the Hūṇas accepted Śaivism.

The Golden Age of Gupta Culture

Humanity lived five privileged centuries in India, from the fourth to the close of the eighth, under the Guptas and Harṣa, and their successors, comparable to the age of Pericles in Athens, of Augustus in Rome and of Elizabeth I in England. It was the age of the formulation of the six Brāhmanic philosophical systems, of the poetry and drama of Kālidāsa, Bhāravi, Kumāradāsa, Daṇḍin and Viśākhadatta,

of the great redactions of the epics and the Purāṇas, of the Mahāyāna metaphysics of Asaṅga, Vasubandhu, and Diṅnāga, of the astronomy of Āryabhaṭṭa and Varāhamihira, of the plastic art of Mathurā, Vidiśā, Sārnāth and Nālandā, of the universities of Taxila, Nālandā, Vikramaśila and Valabhī, of the Chinese pilgrimages to the holy land of the Ganges, and of the Hinduisation of South-east Asia. This age saw also the Ceylonese embassy to Samudragupta (in about A.D. 360), Harṣa's embassy to China (A.D. 641), the three missions of Wang-Hieun-Tse (A.D. 643–657), Yaśovarman's embassy to China (A.D. 731), the mission of Śāntarakṣita and Padmasambhava to Tibet, and the Pallava contribution to the colonial development of the East, and its art, up till the end of the eighth century. As the age drew to its close it witnessed the rise of the Pāla Empire (725–1107), with its suzerainty extending from Gandhāra to Kaliṅga under Dharmapāla (A.D. 770–810), and its missionary activities in Nepal, Tibet, Southern India, Ceylon and Java. For three centuries after the decline of Gupta power and the Hūṇa occupation of the Punjab and Malwa, the lamp of culture and learning shone throughout the land, as Hiuen-Tsang found, from Kāśmira to Kāñchī and from Valabhī to Tāmralipti. The Emperors Harṣa, Yaśovarman, and Nāgabhaṭṭa II of the Pratihāra dynasty, and Dharmapāla of Bengal, kept alive the Gupta tradition by their successful resistance to foreign invasion and by their patronage of culture and learning. In fact the great Imperial Gupta tradition constitutes the classical framework of Indian culture through the ages, utilised rather than obliterated by the Moslems and the British.

Yet even the efflorescence of the Gupta age cannot be adequately appreciated except as the culmination of the Brāhmanic revival that began centuries before with Puṣyamitra in the north and with the Śātavāhanas in the south, and that gave India the popular name, 'the country of the Brāhmaṇas', as Hiuen-Tsang noted in the seventh century. After the fall of the Śuṅgas in the first century B.C., the republican Yaudheyas, who extended their sway from Rajputana to the Punjab, the Bhāraśivas, who ruled over a large part of Northern India and performed ten Aśvamedha sacrifices, and the Vākāṭakas, who ruled Central India from their capital at Nandi-vardhana (Ramtek, thirteen miles from Nagpur), successfully maintained the Brāhmanic national resistance against the attacks of the Yavanas and Kuṣāṇas. It is true that the Yavanas and the Kuṣāṇas carved out large portions of the north, but they were no longer foreigners. The Scythian and Kuṣāṇa occupation of the north for about three

centuries and a half shed to a large extent its foreign character and stamp; and for these three centuries and a half India was completely free from foreign inroads.

The Broad-based, Neo-Brāhmanic Renaissance

It was this long period of order and security that provided the soil for the fine flowering of Gupta culture, whose distinctive character was, in accordance with the spirit of the age, assimilation rather than rejection, integration rather than conflict. The Imperial Guptas, styling themselves Bhāgavatas, or worshippers of Bhagavān Vāsudeva, were leaders of the Neo-Brāhmanic revival, but gave support also to Buddhist expansion. Like the Brāhmanic Viṣṇu-sthānas Deva-kulas and Deva-sabhās, the Buddhist and Jain vihāras were objects of their support and protection. The Buddhist monastery at Nālandā, according to Hiuen-Tsang, was built by the Gupta Emperor Śakrāditya, which some historians consider to be another name for Chandragupta II (Devarāja); while the famous monastery of Dudda, at Valabhī in the west, was due to the benefactions of the Maitrakas, the worshippers of Śiva. Ten thousand students could be accommodated at Nālandā, in its six-storeyed buildings, the gifts of six kings. The teachers, who numbered 1,510, gave a hundred different dissertations every day. These covered the three Vedas, the Atharvaveda, Hetuvidyā (logic), Śabdavidyā (grammar and philosophy), Chikitsāvidyā (medicine), Sāṅkhya, Nyāya, and Yoga-Śāstra; and other subjects such as law, philosophy, astronomy and the grammar of Pāṇini. At Nālandā Hiuen Tsang studied all the collections of Buddhist books as well as the sacred books of the Brāhmaṇas. It was usual at this University to have different teachers expounding different and contrary schools of thought, thus raising doubts and provoking counter-arguments. Vainyagupta, one of the later Gupta kings, gave a donation to the Mahāyāna Buddhist vihāra, the Vaivartika Saṅgha. Other great centres of Buddhist learning of the Gupta and post-Gupta era were Ayodhyā, Kānyakubja, Vidarbha, Udayana, Valabhī, Puṇḍravardhana, Uḍra and Kāñchīpura; which all had their glorious phases, according to the rise and development of the different schools of thought, and the patronage of the various local rulers. In philosophy, literature, art and the positive sciences, there was a free borrowing between the different schools and also from the Yavanas and other foreigners.

In literary patronage and administration, no distinction was made between Brāhmaṇas, Buddhists and Nirgranthas, Śaivas and Vaiṣṇavas, pure and mixed castes, or even between Indians and foreigners.

The Gupta Tradition of Religious Eclecticism

In the sphere of Brāhmanical religion proper, though Bhāgavatism became the religion of the Gupta empire, and though most of the Gupta Emperors, and following them the local kings of the age, called themselves Parama-Bhāgavatas (worshippers of Bhagavān or Kṛiṣṇa-Vāsudeva), they also worshipped Śakti or Durgā, invoked her in their strenuous campaigns of conquest and defence against the invading Hūṇas, and depicted her on their coins; Siṃha-vāhanā and Lakṣmī appropriately figured on many Gupta coins. The worship of Śiva, Sūrya and Kārttikeya, the god of war, was also popular. The breadth of Hindu religious belief in the Gupta epoch is indicated by the names of the various other divinities mentioned in inscriptions: Kubera, Varuna, Indra, Yama, Kumāradeva, Lokapāla Maghavan and Bṛihaspati. Other objects of devotion included Nara, Kinnara, Vidyādhara and Gandharva. The Hindu sects that were important were the Bhāgavatas, Pāśupatas, Māheśvaras, and Sauryas; and also perhaps the Śāktas, or Kāpālikas, as these were called by Hiuen-Tsang. Vedic rituals were revived by the Gupta emperors, especially the imperial horse sacrifice associated with conquest. Many other Vedic ceremonies, performed by various Vākāṭaka kings, find mention in inscriptions: Agniṣṭoma, Āptoryāma, Ukthya, Ṣoḍaśin Atirātra, Vājapeya, Bṛihaspatisava, and Sadyaskara. The Brāhmaṇas observed the Pañchamahāyajña and Agnihotra rituals, and villages were granted to them for the performance of these sacrifices.

Brāhmanical religion, as revived by the Imperial Guptas, one of whom, Samudragupta, was referred to as 'the refuge of religion' and 'the follower of the Path of the Sacred hymns' and of 'the dictates of the śāstras', assumed a syncretic phase, embracing the worship of a wide variety of Hindu gods and goddesses and the restoration of Vedic ceremonies, while at the same time adopting a tolerant attitude towards asceticism, Jainism and Buddhism. No doubt such eclecticism aided the spread of Indian Brāhmanical culture to foreign countries. That the Gupta tradition of religious tolerance and patronage of all faiths, schools and sects was maintained in the time of

Harṣa is shown by this Emperor's five-yearly convention of the Assembly of Mokṣa, at which he used to offer gifts to selected Buddhists, Brāhmaṇas, and heretics, and also to worship the Buddha, Sūrya and Śiva in succession.

The Classical Age of Clarification and Systematisation

Within a compass of about three centuries of the Gupta age and after a rapid change in the composition of the Indian population took place. This racial admixture stimulated intellectual freedom and promoted a liberal, catholic outlook, a spirit of intense devotion or bhakti to the personal god and, as the social expression of worship, compassion to fellow creatures. An undaunted flight of reason in metaphysics and logic was associated with an amazing proliferation of sects and the formulation of the philosophical systems, Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain.

Of the six systems of Hindu philosophy the oldest are the Sāṅkhya and Yoga, which are mentioned together in the Arthaśāstra, the epics and elsewhere. Early in the fourth century A.D. Īśvara Kṛiṣṇa produced the Sāṅkhya Kārikā, and this work gave the Sāṅkhya system its final form. For Yoga philosophy a similar theoretical formulation was provided by the Vyāsabhāṣya on the Yoga-Sūtras of Patañjali, produced in about A.D. 300. For Mīmāṃsā philosophy the Śabara-bhāṣya, also composed in about A.D. 300, supplied a systematic exposition. As for Vedānta philosophy, in the Gupta age this seems to have been identified with the Upaniṣads. One of the authorities recognised by the Vedānta Sūtras is of course the Bhagavadgītā. But the Vedānta Sūtras also refer to certain Vedāntic portions of the Mahābhārata (especially the twelfth book), several of which represent forms of the Vedānta differing significantly from Śaṅkara's teaching and closely related to the systems of the Bhāgavatas. It was not Śaṅkara but Rāmānuja who interpreted Vedānta according to some contemporary tradition; but that tradition has faded away. Bodhāyana, who commented upon the Vedānta Sūtras, cannot be identified. Nor do we know anything about Bhartṛiprapañcha, Dramiḍāchārya, Upavarṣa, Brahmanandin or Ṭaṅka, who preceded Śaṅkara and Rāmānuja, and who might have flourished in the Gupta period. The Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika systems of philosophy received their systematisation at the hands of Gautama, who wrote the Nyāya Sūtras in the early years of the Gupta period, and Vātsyāy-

ana, who wrote his famous Nyāya bhāṣya at the end of the fourth century A.D. In this he made a critical study of the Mādhyamika doctrine of Śūnyatā and the absolute idealism of the Buddhist Yogāchāra School. Finally, Praśastapāda's Padārthadharma-Saṅgraha gave a systematic formulation to the Vaiśeṣika Sūtras during this period.

The schools of Buddhist philosophy were even more active. The famous brothers of Ayodhyā, Asaṅga and Vasubandhu, laid the foundations of the Buddhist Yogāchāra School of absolute idealism in about the beginning of the fourth century A.D. Asaṅga's famous works included the Mahāyāna Samparigraha, the Yogāchāra-bhūmiśāstra and the Mahāyāna-sūtrālaṅkāra. Vasubandhu was the author of the Viṃśatika, Triṃśatika and Paramārtha-saptati. The Mahāyāna school of absolute idealism developed most rigorously the conceptions of the non-reality of the external world and the reality of Vijñāna, the essence of Dharmakāya, which provoked acute controversy between Hindu and Buddhist schools of thought, and between the Buddhist schools themselves. This era also saw the refinement of logic, and in this field the Buddhists led the way. Vasubandhu's famous work, Tarkaśāstra, and Diṅnāga's Nyāyamukha are considered to be among the greatest achievements in Indian philosophy. The Jains meanwhile produced the Tattvārthādhigama-sūtra, which is a remarkable effort in systematisation. The Gupta age was indeed an epoch of formulation and systematisation, clarification and criticism, testifying to the real philosophical power and originality that existed among a large variety of active religious sects and schools of thought.

The tolerance and catholicity of the philosophical and religious discussions, which were conducted in accordance with established principles and procedures, are amply evident from the following passage in the Harṣa-charita, which describes the bewildering array of sects and schools of thought that were represented at a gathering before a Buddhist monk-teacher who had been converted from Brāhmanism. 'Then in the midst of the trees, while he was yet at a distance, the holy man's presence was suddenly announced to the King by his seeing various Buddhists from different provinces seated in diverse positions, perched on pillars, seated on the rocks, reclining in bowers of creepers, lying in thickets or in the shadow of the branches, or squatting on the roots of trees—devotees dead to all passion; Jains in white robes (Śvetāmbaras); white mendicants; followers of Kṛiṣṇa; religious students; ascetics who pull out their

hair; followers of Kaṇāda; followers of the Upaniṣads; believers in God as a Creator; assayers of metals; students of the legal institutes; students of the Purāṇas; adepts in sacrifices requiring seven ministering priests; adepts in grammar; followers of the Pāñcharātra; and others besides; all diligently following their own tenets, pondering, urging objections, raising doubts, resolving them, giving etymologies, disputing, studying and explaining; and all gathered there as his disciples'.

The Spirit of the Neo-Brāhmanic Revival

Brāhmanic orthodoxy reacted to the fluid social and intellectual situation in several distinct ways. By about 200–100 B.C. the Mahābhārata in its expanded form and the Mānavadharma Śāstra presented the Vedic scheme of life to orthodox society; but the final systematisation of Brāhmanic norms from the philosophical and metaphysical viewpoints had to wait till the regime of the Imperial Guptas. This then became necessary in order to meet the fresh danger of social laxity and deviation from foreigners, who though Indianised accepted different heretical sects of Hinduism, and from Buddhism, which witnessed an upsurge of bhakti and a new social orientation with the rise of the Mahāyāna at the beginning of the Christian era. First, Brāhmanism reacted in the literary field. The modification in the Smṛitis and the enunciation of Brāhmanic social and ethical ideals in the redactions of the Mahābhārata and the major Purāṇas served the most important purpose of reaffirming Hindu law, custom and culture against the incursion of exotic and barbarian ideals, which the Yavanas and other Mlechchhas were persistently introducing into Indian life. Whole kingdoms had been carved out in Gujarāta, Kāṭhiāwāṛ, Mālwā, Mahārāṣṭra and the Punjab in the pre-Gupta period by such foreigners and 'Mlechchhas' as the Śakas, Sassanians, Muruṇḍas, Ābhīras, Gardabhillas and Yavanas.

The early Dharma Sūtras developed, as we have seen, the theory of Āpaddharma and Kali-yuga, or the age of social decline, according to which the violation of duties by even the highest castes was tolerated and even accepted, because of the exigency of social circumstances. The Mahābhārata refers to this, while the Bhagavadgītā and the Purāṇas inculcate also the Messianic hope of the incarnation of the future Saviour of Mankind, Kṛiṣṇa-Vāsudeva, who would be reborn as many times as there was a decay of righteousness, for the

protection of the virtuous and the destruction of the wicked. The divine prophecy that the righteous order of society would be restored served to strengthen the common man's faith in his ancient values and institutions, and to protect him against new influences and ideals, foreign as well as Buddhist. Positively, the Epics, the Purāṇas and the Dharmaśāstras elucidated and clarified the fundamental metaphysical principles and moral values that were acceptable to all sects and philosophical schools in Brāhmanical culture. The entire social and metaphysical background of the Indian and his scheme of life found indeed, as never before, rich, vigorous expression in the voluminous Epic and Purāṇic literature, as well as in the classical Sanskrit kāvyas. Sanskrit had begun to be renovated in Śuṅga times, and under the Guptas it virtually replaced Prākṛit as the language of the people. As the great editors and scholars of the Gupta age expurgated, added, and elaborated material from the Mahābhārata and such Purāṇas as the Bhāgavata, Skanda, Śiva, Matsya and Vāyu, they not only rescued these from neglect, and even oblivion, but took the indispensable first step in defence of the essentials of the Brāhmanical dharma against Buddhism. Not merely the Epics but also the major Purāṇas were developed to a high level, with the special object of educating the Śūdras and the women-folk of India.

The religious movement took both an educational and patriotic turn. Apart from the egalitarian trends of early Pāñcharātra Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism, Śaktism and other heresies, the orthodox Brāhmaṇa teachers and preachers, as they went round among the common people, calling upon the Kṣatriyas to fulfil their true social role in war-like duties rather than in seclusion in monastery or cloister, and also upon the Vaiśyas and Śūdras to conform to the dharma of their vocations, were rescuing the country from the false pietism and other-worldliness that were emasculating the manhood of the race. Such preaching went home to the people, who were stirred by the glorious traditions of military valour of the legendary Kṣatriya houses, and repelled by the immorality that was then gradually creeping into the Buddhist Saṅghārāmas, many of which were rolling in wealth and luxury. This probably led to the exclusion of nuns from the Saṅgha, as Buddhaghoṣa mentions in about A.D. 500. The Chinese monk-pilgrim, I-tsing (673–685) must have been struck by the accumulation of wealth, the granaries and the host of servants, male and female, in a Buddhist monastery, for he did not consider these as wholesome, and stressed that the monk's

true aim was to reach nirvāṇa. Soon the Epics, the Purāṇas, the Hitopadeśa and the Pañchatantra were to take the place of the Buddhist Jātakas, although the former were written in Sanskrit, the lingua franca of the Gupta age.

Kālidāsa's Raghuvaṃśaṃ and Sanskrit Kāvya

Kālidāsa's Raghuvaṃśaṃ, composed at the beginning of the fifth century according to several authorities, is the saga of Gupta imperialism. Although its central figure is Rāmachandra, it describes a great Digvijaya reminiscent of the conquest of India by Samudragupta, whose horse-sacrifice finds an echo in the Mālavikāgnimitraṃ. A model mahākāvya, it is concerned with all the goals of human life and enumerates the attributes of the true Indian character, as found in the Raghu dynasty. It clarified and restated the Brāhmanical scheme and ideals of life, and at the same time set forth the supremacy of the Buddhist virtue of compassion, as in the story of Dilīpa's offer of his body to a lion in exchange for its victim, the cow Nandinī; which is reminiscent of the Jātaka legend of Gautama sacrificing himself to save the tiger-cubs from the jaws of their hungry mother.

Classical Sanskrit kāvya was saturated with the spirit of the Neo-Brāhmanical renaissance, concerned as it was with the restoration of order and stability to the troubled earth, the final subjugation or expulsion of the 'dāruṇa Mlechchhas', and the all-round well-being and prosperity of the people. Hariṣeṇa's famous panegyric (praśasti) on Samudragupta inscribed on a pillar at Allahabad (*c.* A.D. 345) is an excellent example of the kāvya style. The fateful moment when Chandragupta I in his old age chooses Samudragupta as his heir before the court is vividly described: '"He is noble"; with these words he embraced him, tremors of joy betraying his emotion; he gazed on him with tear-filled eyes, following his every movement and weighing his worth—the courtiers sighed in relief, and gloomy were the faces of his kinsfolk—and said to him, "Do thou protect all this earth".'

Two and a half centuries after the Imperial Guptas Hiuen-Tsang refers to Sanskrit as the language of the cultured classes, including the Buddhists; the best Sanskrit, both spoken and written, being that of Middle India. But there were, he noted, variations from the original source and standard, which by use became the norm, and gave rise to vulgar dialects removed from the pure style. As a matter

of fact, even the Buddhist and Jain philosophers and literary men now began to write in Sanskrit, which replaced Pāli and the Prākṛits as the language of the common people, understood from one end of the continent to the other, and even beyond in South-East Asia. This was all the more necessary since besides the popular Buddhist Jātaka stories, which attained wide celebrity, important Buddhist kāvyas such as the Buddha-charita, the Saundarananda and Jātakamālā were written in Sanskrit and appealed to the Hindu élite. To these Kālidāsa's Raghuvaṃśaṃ and Kumārasambhavaṃ, which is concerned with the sanctity of the Indian home and family, served as rejoinders on behalf of Brāhmanism and the Brāhmanic social order.

The Mutual Assimilation of Beliefs between Brāhmanism and Buddhism

The second way in which Brāhmanic culture met the challenge of Buddhism was by taking the wind out of its sails: it accepted the Buddha as one of the ten incarnations of Viṣṇu. The Hindu masses were thus induced to accept a heresy as one of the various complex intellectual dogmas within the field of Brāhmanism. While on the social side there were inter-marriages between the royal families of India irrespective of their being Buddhist, Śaiva or Vaiṣṇava, on the doctrinal side there were a mutual assimilation and integration of dogmas and beliefs. Viṣṇu, the serene Vedic god, resting on the waters of eternity before the creation of the cosmos, became in the Gupta age, through the doctrine of incarnation, a dynamic saviour of mankind; his Messianic promise and redeeming love for humanity being akin to that of the compassionate Bodhisattva of Mahāyāna Buddhism. The dynamism of the deity in both Mahāyāna Buddhism and reformed Hinduism brought religion closer to the heart of the masses, and was eminently suited to a cosmopolitan epoch in which worship and work had to be reconciled. In fact the cult of self-sacrifice, service, and compassion for all creatures stands out as the common feature of all faiths in the Gupta age; and the ideal of harmonising work and worship, activity and serenity, was given classic expression in Kālidāsa's poems and dramas, whose chaste and elegant language has been a source of inspiration to the Indian through the centuries.

Buddhism, meanwhile, had itself undergone a profound change. The early emphatic demand for a break with saṃsāra and the adoption of monachism for all was rejected by the new Mahāyāna

interpretation, which reconciled the worldly and the religious life by identifying the Bodhisattva's peace and activity with the life of the world; nirvāṇa itself now meaning not the flight of the Alone to the Alone, but a dynamic, eternal and infinite outpouring of the One-in-the-All. Further, though Buddhism completely repudiated the Brāhmaṇic social gradation and classification of duties according to varṇa and stage, or order of life, the social climate of the Gupta age, characterised by the inter-mixture of castes and caste functions, left little difference between orthodoxy and heresy in this respect.

The Interchange between Mahāyāna Idealism and Vedāntism

Thirdly, Brāhmanism reacted at the intellectual level. Buddhism, which appealed to the aristocracy of intellect and remained the religion of a very small minority of the Indian people, developed exceedingly subtle, complex and elaborate metaphysical doctrines which crystallised into as many as eighteen sects, mentioned by Hiuen-Tsang; the most important being the Mādhyamikas and the Yogāchāras, developed by Nāgārjuna, Asaṅga, Vasubandhu and other great patriarchs in the Gupta period. Mahāyāna metaphysical speculations, some of which represent the highest flights ever achieved by the human intellect, provoked energetic reactions, rejoinders and reconciliations in orthodoxy, the most significant being the Vedānta system. Literary historians attribute the particular Upaniṣads that are exclusively Vedāntic to a period several centuries after the beginning of the Christian era. Such is the Māṇḍūkya, with its commentary, the Gauḍapādīya Kārikā, which is probably of the seventh century. Between the first and fifth centuries, the philosophical systems of Brāhmanism were evolved and formulated; all of them resting on the notion of Ātman, Brahman or the Universal self, eternal, omnipresent and identical with the Absolute. In the Vedānta's rejection of dualism, and its stress on the doctrine that the discrete and manifold phenomena of the world are real in so far as they are grounded in the Absolute, Ātman-Brahman, and its corollary, that man's bondage exists only through illusion or Māyā; and that as the veil of his illusion is done away with, his bondage and salvation, transmigration and mukti, existence and non-existence, become identical, we reach not the borderlands but the very heart of the Buddhist principles of Suchness and cosmic vacuity or silence, which must themselves have been influenced by early Vedāntism.

One of the most brilliant Mahāyāna texts, the Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra, probably composed early in the fifth century A.D., actually compares the unreality of the phenomenal world to the horns of the hare, the son of a barren woman, and the circle of fire that is produced when a burning stick (alāta) is whirled round. Such a notion, along with the positive conception of Tathāgata-garbha (the womb of all that merges in Suchness), which is veiled by the phenomenal appearances presented by the operation of the senses, formed an integral part of the development of Vedāntic non-duality, which ran an almost parallel course with the uncompromising idealism of Asaṅga, Vasubandhu and Kumārila and Śaṅkara, so often referred to by Hiuen-Tsang. This similarity to the doctrine of Ātman as the eternal agent and the unconditioned is recognised in the Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra, which states, however, that 'this explanation of Tathāgata-garbha as the ultimate truth and reality is given in order to attract to our creed those heretics who are superstitiously inclined to believe in the Ātman doctrine', and that the teaching of a philosophy which admits of no soul or substance in anything (nairātmya) would frighten disciples. On the other hand, Gauḍapāda, one of the most famous precursors of the Vedānta system and perhaps himself a Buddhist, fully assimilated the doctrines of cosmic emptiness and Suchness of the Buddhist schools of Mādhyamika and Yogāchāra, and reached the conclusion that the Upaniṣadic doctrine of the unconditioned, eternal, universal, silent Ātman is the same as the Buddhist ultimate reality of non-dual, eternal, undefinable silent Vijñāna or vacuity, 'from which there is no coming into Being in any manner as the Buddhas have shown'.

What differentiates Vedāntism, with its stress on 'neti, neti', which is in close accord with the Mādhyamika doctrine of the Void (śūnyatā), is the essentially positive doctrine that Brahman-Ātman is transcendent, and yet eternal and omnipresent, given in every moment and phase of consciousness. Gauḍapāda's conclusions thus led the way to the reinterpretation of the Upaniṣads on Buddhist lines, which crystallised in the hands of Śaṅkara into the philosophy of the Vedānta. Śaṅkara could not but have been influenced by the doctrines of Buddhism and Jainism; they may even have been flourishing still in his home-land. At the time of Hiuen-Tsang's visit in the seventh century Mahā-Kośala, Mahārāṣṭra and the Koṅkaṇa, all maintained Saṅghārāmas with Buddhist monks, partly Mahāyānist and partly Hīnayānist. Amarāvatī was an ancient seat of Buddhism. Diṅnāga, the famous Buddhist logician, came from the

Andhra country; while the name of the famous Mahāyānist scholar Nāgārjuna is also associated with the ancient site of the Nāgārjunikoṇḍa stūpa. Presumably, therefore, Śaṅkara must have been familiar with Buddhist ideas. In one of his commentaries he observes: 'The doctrine of the unreality of the external world was indeed propounded by the Buddha, who adapted himself to the mental state of some of his disciples, whom he perceived to be attached to external things; but it does not represent his own views, according to which cognitions alone are real'. Scholars have also noted the striking analogy between the Mahāyāna position, fully expounded in the Lotus sūtra, and Śaṅkara's own critical procedure, distinguishing the parā and aparā vidyā, and between the corresponding texts. Thus does orthodoxy take over an integral part of Buddhist doctrine. The rise of Mahāyāna Buddhism represents the conquest of the simple creed of Gautama by Hinduism. The rise of the Vedānta, the most famous and comprehensive of the Indian philosophical systems, which still commands the allegiance of the élite in India, marks the triumph of Buddhism over its conqueror. No wonder Śaṅkara's interpretation was condemned by orthodoxy as 'disguised Buddhism'.

Classical Serenity and Restraint in Literature

The peace and tranquillity of the land proved favourable to the full expression of the national genius, which reacted against all that was exotic and foreign as never before. The ground had long been prepared by contact with the Hellenic, Iranian, and Chinese worlds; now, in the spacious age of the Guptas, with its sufficiency of leisure for the refined nobility, kāvya, drama, lyric poetry, and stories of romance and adventure all blossomed forth. Love and adventure naturally occupied the leading places. In the classical poetry of India there is neither squeamishness about sex nor brutish sensuality. The joys of a couple are often described in the light of the principles of Kāmaśāstra (the science of erotics); yet there is no exaggeration nor exuberance of the sexual sentiments. In the great poems of Kālidāsa, who lived between A.D. 400 and 455 according to many scholars, we find the gentle and smooth course of family love described in a most exquisite, idealised setting. Love is a discipline and transmutation of desire, and its bliss can only be tasted by a couple long accustomed to the discipline of Kāma (passion). Yet we also find in Kālidāsa the poignant grief of Rati for her husband Kāma-deva, who was burnt

to ashes by Śiva before the divine nuptials could be celebrated; and the deep longing of Yakṣa for his beloved, which spills over into the whole universe in the drip, drip, drip of the rainy season. Love, all-pervasive and all-fulfilling, yet gentle and restrained, compounded of passion and obligation, is the keynote of Kālidāsa's poetry.

His Kumārasambhava is perhaps the finest kāvya in Sanskrit. It gives a classic picture of the contemplative divine pair, Śiva and Umā. Śiva has been the archetype of the Indian yogī ever since the immemorial age of the Indus civilization that carved the limestone torso at Mohenjodaro; and in the Gupta period the serenity of the Śiva image was reinforced by Buddhist contemplation and image-making. The Kumārasambhava describes Śiva in the tranquillity of yoga, seated under the devadāru tree, still as a flame where no wind blows, a cloud without rain and a lake without ripple, unaware of the untimely rejuvenation of nature with the advent of spring and the God of Love.

To him comes the beautiful Umā, garlanded with spring flowers, to offer her worship. She scatters flowers at Śiva's feet and makes her bow. Śiva blesses her: 'May you have a husband who never gives attention to another woman'. Umā offers him a rosary of seeds from lotuses grown in the Mandākinī. As Śiva is going to accept it, Kāma, the God of Love, bends his bow and lets fly his unfailing arrow. Śiva, whose firmness is slightly disturbed, like the sea at the rising of the moon, permits his eyes to settle for a moment on Umā's fresh lips, as red as the bimba fruit. Umā too betrays her delight; her face is slightly averted and her eyes agitated. Śiva immediately controls himself, finds the God of Love doing his mischief, and reduces him to ashes with one glance of his third eye.

Kāma's wife, Rati, bitterly mourns her loss and determines to immolate herself on the funeral pyre which she asks Spring to prepare. Umā is baffled and ashamed, and deprecates her own beauty. She determines to make her beauty fruitful by austerities that may far eclipse those practised by the anchorites. How else can she secure the immortal love of such an immortal husband? In summer she places herself in the midst of blazing fires and gazes at the sun, the source of life. In the rains she is drenched from head to foot as she lies on a bare slab. The nights watch her from above with their lightning flashes. In winter she stands in icy water; the blizzards pelt her with a thick mass of sleet. But she does not mind her penance and pities two chakravāka birds that cry to each other in their separation in the dark night. Ultimately, the mortifications that are wasting Umā's

delicate frame move the ascetic god, and he decides to accept her. He appears in disguise to test her devotion and promises to marry her. 'From this moment, O drooping maiden, I am thy slave', so spake he whose crest is the moon; and straightway all the fatigue of Umā's self-torment vanished, so true is it that fruitful toil is as if it had never been'. Then the seven sages appear and settle the marriage.

Śiva and Umā are the God and Goddess of the universe, whose union is the union of Pratyaya and Prakṛiti, (Raghuvaṃśaṃ, XI, 56), and whose task it is to perpetuate the scheme of the universe, the race of man and the heritage of dharma. It is the tapas of both that prepares the ground for their marriage and family life. The norms of human love and marriage are set by the Divine tapas that precedes the delights of wedlock. The Kumārasambhava eloquently delineates the sanctity of the forces that make the Indian home and family. Out of the union of Śiva and Umā is born the war-god Kārttikeya, who saves the world from the menace of the demon Tāraka.

Romantic Attachment versus Married Love

Indian culture has always discountenanced romantic love dissociated from social duties. Kālidāsa's great dramas, Śākuntalaṃ and Vikramorvaśīyaṃ, both deal in a most charming manner with romantic stories of passion and secret attachment followed by separation and suffering. The loving, oddly estranged pair in the Abhijñāna Śākuntalaṃ are finally united in marriage, but not before their spirits have been chastened by tribulations patiently borne and the birth of a child, who becomes the symbol of the perfect union. In the drama, Śārṅgarava rebukes Śakuntalā when she is rejected by Duṣyanta, 'Thus does one's heedlessness lead to disaster'. The curse of the proud and angry sage, Durvāsas, on Śakuntalā, for her dereliction of duty through the intoxication of love, symbolises the stern but beneficent rebuke of society to the heroine who lightly turns to thoughts of love. Similarly, in Vikramorvaśīyaṃ, Bharata's curse on Urvaśī stands for society's uncompromising reprimand. Lost in her love for Purūravas as she is playing at 'Lakṣmī-Svayaṃvara' in heaven, she so forgets herself that when she is asked, 'Who is the Lord of thy heart?' instead of answering 'Puruṣottama', she answers 'Purūravas'. On the curses of Durvāsas and Bharata hangs the unfolding of the plot in each of the dramas. In the Kumārasambhava neither the blossoming youth of Umā nor the desire of Śiva can unite the Divine pair; contemplation

and austerity for both are necessary preludes to the Divine nuptials. In the Śākuntalaṃ and the Vikramorvaśīyaṃ it is not until love passes through an ordeal of sorrow and its impetuosity and intoxication are left far behind, that the king-lover and heroine are ready for reunion and permanent happiness, with the heroic boy, Bharata, or Ayus, as the hope and promise of the future.

In the Gupta age the Gandharva pattern of union—the love-match followed by the spirits of the sky—which was lawful in the past, was going out of vogue and Kālidāsa strongly condemned such a secret and passionate attachment. 'A union, especially in private', observes Kālidāsa in the Śākuntalaṃ, 'should be formed after careful examination. Friendship towards those whose hearts are unknown thus turns into hostility'. The misfortunes of both Śakuntalā and Urvaśī are in large measure self-imposed. Thus while the curses participate in the nature of an inexorable and incalculable Fate or Destiny governing the development of the plots, the dramatic device here is akin to that of the Ghost in Euripides and Shakespeare and cannot be regarded as external and fortuitous. It is because Kālidāsa, while believing in a cosmic order grounded in Destiny, Ṛita or Dharma, does not wholly dissociate human misfortune or suffering from human responsibility that his dramas have won such wide recognition as masterpieces.

According to Indian literary tradition, of all arts the best is the drama, of all dramas, the Abhijñāna Śākuntalaṃ, of the Abhijñāna Śākuntalaṃ, the fourth act, and of that act, the verses in which the sage bids farewell to his foster daughter. These depict the profound sympathy and tenderness of the hermitage trees and creepers, so long tended by Śakuntalā, to whom they bend in friendship and devotion as she bids them farewell on setting forth on her fateful journey to the court of King Duṣyanta. The entire world of trees, birds and animals sheds tears, strangely overwhelmed with anxiety at her coming misfortune, which, as a mortal, and in the fullness of her youthful love, she can by no means anticipate. The forest gazelle tries to pull her back, catching hold of the fringe of her garment, and runs after her for a long way, in an attempt to prevent the agony that fate has ordained for her. In its preoccupation with the thought of Śakuntalā's coming ordeal the chakravāka bird remains irresponsive to the call of his mate. She cries aloud, anticipating the piteous wail of Śakuntalā at the court of Duṣyanta, when the latter similarly fails to reciprocate. Śakuntalā is too full of romantic fervour to heed warnings, but the cry reaches the fringe of consciousness of her friends, especially Priyaṃvadā. Out of the interplay of human

moods and the sympathetic response of the trees, animals and genii of the forest hermitage Kālidāsa's poetic sensibility creates a profound unity of the animate and inanimate worlds that is unsurpassed in the world's literature. And against the background of this intense and poignant human situation, which merges into the natural scene, there stands out the wise, dignified and solemn figure of Kaṇva.

Not romantic passion but deep, steady and intimate wedded love is the Indian ideal. Both Kālidāsa and Bhavabhūti (who flourished in the seventh century A.D.), have utilised the grand ancient theme of the conjugal love of Rāmachandra and Sītā, as told in the Rāmāyaṇa. Bhavabhūti was the first, however, to dramatise its chequered course. His Uttararāmacharita is characterised by intense pathos and skilful delineation of dramatic situations, which are often developed by departing from the story of the original epic. The scene in Act I, where Sītā goes to sleep in fatigue and anxiety after being shown the paintings depicting incidents of forest life, is a superb portrayal of the depth and nobility of conjugal love. Whereas Kālidāsa, the child of fortune in the Golden Age of the Imperial Guptas, excels in depicting the felicity and tenderness of love, Bhavabhūti, born in a less spacious epoch, and experiencing the political vicissitudes of Kanauj, reveals greater depth and passion, as well as maturity of sentiment. Bhavabhūti observes: 'Some mysterious inner bond brings things together. Love does not indeed depend upon external circumstances. The white lotus blooms with the rise of the sun; the moonstone melts with the rise of the cold-rayed moon'. Both Kālidāsa and Bhavabhūti nobly succeed in setting forth the ideal of conjugal devotion, dignity and fortitude in the story of Rāma and Sītā, and the profound pathos of the fate of the queen, abandoned only because the king subordinates his love and compassion to the wishes of his people. But in Bhavabhūti we certainly discern a deeper and more mature experience, underlined by richer expression and more profound interpretation, than in Kālidāsa, thus bringing an ancient legend into the Indian's everyday experience. The super-man (Lokottara), whose character is made up of 'the relentlessness of the thunderbolt and the tenderness of the budding flower', here descends from the grand and heroic arena of the epic to the plane of ordinary mortals, with their bitter anguish and suffering.

The Range of Gupta Literature

In other directions, however, Indian literature developed to the extent that we have a drama like Viśākhadatta's Mudrārākṣasa, in which love plays no part, and politics is the one dominant passion —loyalty to King Chandragupta. Kālidāsa, in his drama Mālavikā-gnimitram, refers to such earlier celebrated authors as Bhāsa, Saumilla and Kaviputra. One of Bhāsa's best-known plays is Chārudattā, whose theme is the same as that of the celebrated Mṛichchhakaṭika, the Little Clay Cart, produced long before the time of Kālidāsa. The characters of the play include villains, thieves and courtesans; and yet we find confident goodness and humanity in the midst of sordidness, and beauty, love and fidelity in the midst of the storm and passion of life. Only a civilization that had reached maturity and security could have produced such a moving realistic drama as King Śūdraka's Mṛichchhakaṭika—a genuine instance of 'art for art's sake', yet suffused with the profound wisdom and serenity of India. Then there are the narrative tales of Gunāḍhya, to be found in his Bṛihat-kathā, composed in the first or second century A.D., which tell of incredible exploits of sailors, brigands, rogues and harlots outwitting kings and even gods. There are also the romances of Daṇḍin, Subandhu and Bāṇa, in which we sometimes meet with a complete rejection of morals, though not of conscience, and always impossible but picturesque ruses and adventures.

The Ratnāvalī of the Emperor Harṣa (A.D. 606–647) and Rājaśe-khara's Karpūramañjarī, (written at the close of the ninth century), are of value for the vivid descriptions they contain of the spring festival, the Kāmotsava, Madhūtsava, or Vasantotsava. Kāmadeva, the God of Love, was worshipped in the red Aśoka tree, at the foot of which was placed Pradyumna, regarded as his incarnation. Gifts of sandals, saffron cakes, and flowers were offered to the God by the women, who then worshipped their husbands as his manifestations. During the later epoch, from the tenth to the thirteen centuries, the spring festival of Kāmadeva or Lakṣmī merged into the public swing festival of Gaurī, which lasted for a month; later still it was gradually transformed into the Holi. The Ratnāvalī's description of the Vasantotsava is reminiscent of the scattering of coloured dust and the spraying of coloured water that occur in the modern spring festival.

An humble but elegant poet of the period was Vatsabhaṭṭi, who wrote an inscription (A.D. 473–474) for the guild of silk-cloth weavers

of Mandasore, where a lofty temple of the Sun was renovated by them. He uses fine similes and metaphors with great skill, and his inscription reaches the level of a noble kāvya. The silk-weavers, besides knowing their own craft, acquainted themselves with archery, astrology, ancient tales, and religious discourses, and they also took part in warfare. The guild was not only rich and prosperous, and held in respect by kings, but its members, aware of the transience of material goods, were of great piety. In the inscription the city of Daśapura is most attractively described.

Along with literature in its various forms, painting, song and dance added to the enjoyment and embellishment of life. Important lyric poets of the seventh century were Mayūra, Māgha and Bhartṛihari, who wrote vividly and ardently on love in its diverse nuances. These poets were followed by another distinguished poet, Amaru, in the eighth century. In the Mālavikāgnimitram, we come across an actual dancing competition, and also a speech in which dancing is extolled as the divine of all arts. The Gupta era also saw the composition of the Kāmandakīya Nītisāra (third–fourth century A.D.), which is mentioned by Bhavabhūti and Daṇḍin. Continuing the Kauṭilīya tradition of government and methods of administration, the Nītisāra's general maxims and aphorisms give it a high place among the Nītiśāstras. The treatise obtained wide recognition and reached even the island of Bali, which was familiar with the Nītiśāstra and the Kāmandakīya. Some scholars identify the author of the Kāmandakīya Nītisāra with Śikharasvāmin, who was the prime minister of Chandragupta II, Vikramāditya.

The spontaneity, order, and upsurge of life, thought, and activity in the spacious age of the Guptas were abundantly reflected in its incomparable literature. The influence of foreign cultural currents was negligible, and among all the literary forms it is only in the drama and the romance that it can be discerned by critics. India's reaction to foreign influences is best illustrated by the development of the national style in Gupta sculpture and painting, which will be dealt with in a later chapter.

Achievements in the Positive Sciences

The contact with the Hellenistic world bore fruit, however, in the field of the positive sciences. Varāhamihira, who wrote about A.D., 550 includes in his Pañchasiddhāntika two Siddhāntas bearing foreign

names, viz., the Romaka, which is connected with Rome, and is probably derived from Alexandria, and the Pauliśa, probably derived from Paulus Alexandrinus. Greek ideas bore rich fruit in the astronomical and mathematical systems of Varāhamihira, Āryabhaṭṭa, and later mathematicians. Here again, though India borrowed, she developed her own systems of astronomy, algebra and geometry, which, through Arab mathematics, influenced the Western world. Āryabhaṭṭa (A.D. 476–499) was the greatest mathematician of the age, having used zero and decimals, extracted square and cube roots and solved quadratic equations. Without the use of the telescope he calculated with some precision the position and movements of the planets. Brahmagupta, who flourished at the time of Harṣa, was also the greatest astronomer-mathematician of the world in his time. He forestalled the discovery of the Newtonian law of gravitation. Within a century after his death, his Siddhānta was taken to Baghdad at the instance of Caliph Mansur for translation into Arabic.

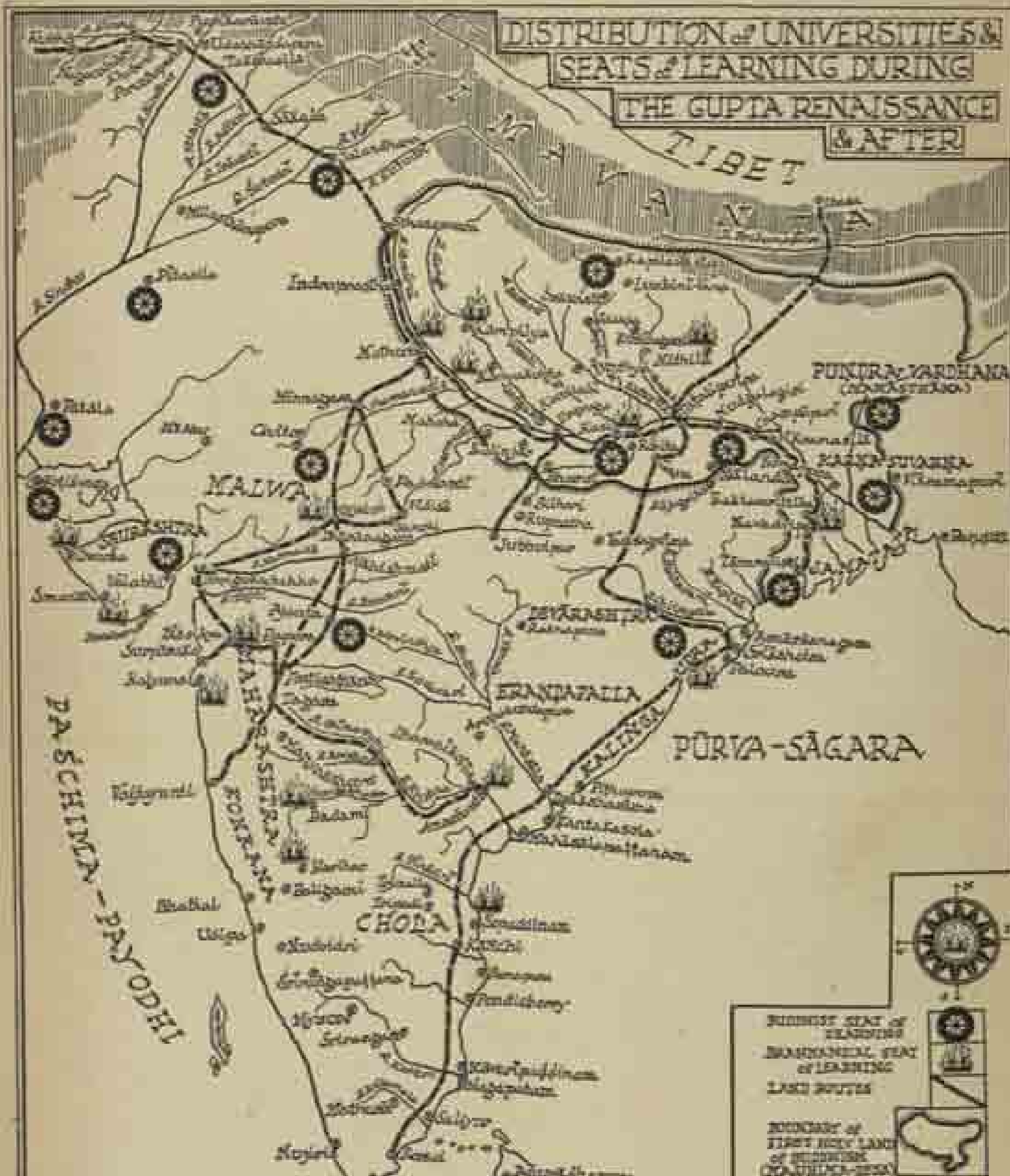
The Gupta age also saw a considerable development of medical science (Chikitsāvidyā). There were hospitals in the big cities and towns for both men and animals, and the study of medicine was compulsory for all at the University of Nālandā, as was noted by I-tsing. The Chinese traveller refers to eight branches of medical science practised by all physicians: (1) sores, inward and outward; (2) diseases above the neck; (3) diseases below the neck, or bodily diseases; (4) demoniac diseases due to attack by evil spirits; (5) the Agada medicine, i.e., antidotes or medicines for counteracting poisons; (6) diseases of children from the embryo stage to the sixteenth year; (7) the means of lengthening life; and (8) the methods of invigorating the body. The traveller adds that any physician who is well versed in these never fails to secure a living in the official service. The surgical processes of cauterising with fire and performing a puncture are also mentioned by I-tsing. A most important medical work, Navanītakaṃ, which borrowed extensively from earlier well-known texts such as the Charakasaṃhitā, the Suśrutasaṃhitā, and the Bhedasaṃhitā, was composed in the Gupta period, and a manuscript of this was found in Turkestan. Pālakāpya's Hastyāyurveda—a treatise dealing with elephant diseases—was composed in the Gupta age.

The famous Nāgārjuna was regarded by Hiuen-Tsang not only as a philosopher of the first rank but in addition as a great experimentalist in chemistry and metallurgy. The remarkable metallurgical skill achieved by Indian scientists and craftsmen is amply demonstrated by the treatment of iron in the famous Iron pillar at Delhi.

The Newton of the Gupta age was Varāhamihira, whose knowledge of all the sciences and arts (Śilpasthāna-vidyā), from botany to astronomy and from metallurgy to civil engineering, was profound. His famous Bṛihat-saṃhitā is an encyclopaedia of the sciences and arts and stands as a monument of scientific genius and enterprise.

The Quest of the Universal and the Eternal

The transformation of the monastic creed of the Buddha into a worldly, institutional religion, the spread of devotionalism in all religions and sects, the growth of overseas trade, colonisation and intercourse, the change in the economic structure due to the rise of a rich merchant and professional class, and above all, the establishment and consolidation of a powerful Empire that symbolised national culture and resistance to the hordes of invaders and barbarians, proved extremely favourable to a clear definition of conventions and styles, both in literature and in the fine arts, and ushered in the 'classical' art of India. The Gupta period was essentially an age in which the people of India soared into the eternal and abstract in all fields of life. The doctrines of Universal sovereignty and a Universal Culture State, associated with political expansion and the unity of Āryāvarta, the religious conceptions of the Universal Man and the Universal community, the Messianic hope of deliverance in all cults and creeds, the clarification of universal axioms and postulates in philosophy, the fruitful development of the positive sciences, the 'classicism' in literature, sculpture and painting, the fictions of Varṇa-saṅkara and Kaliyuga and the entry of foreigners as new caste groups, and the mitigation of caste distinctions in law and in practice, are all characteristic attempts by Gupta India to reach out to the universal. These comprise India's abiding legacy from Gupta culture, which has indeed moulded both her ideology and institutional framework ever since that spacious Periclean Age of Indian history.



DISTRIBUTION of UNIVERSITIES & SEATS of LEARNING DURING THE GUPTA RENAISSANCE & AFTER
TIBET
MALWA
PŪRVA-SĀGARA
PAŚCHIMA-PAYODHI
MAHODADHI
CHOLA
KALINGA
PUNDRA-VARDHANA
MAHARASHTRA

CHAPTER X

LIFE AND LEARNING AT THE BUDDHIST UNIVERSITIES

A Westward Pilgrim in the Footsteps of the Buddha

IN A.D. 623 a young Chinese scholar, tall and handsome and only twenty years old, was ordained a Buddhist monk, like his elder brother, at Chang-an, the famous ancient city of China, where five centuries earlier Indian monks from Kāśmira, Kucha and Kashgar had founded Buddhist monasteries. For some years he wandered about visiting the chief monasteries of China in order to study the Buddhist scriptures, and there grew in him an irrepressible longing to see the sacred places associated with Buddha Śākyamuni in the 'Western land'. In A.D. 629, after some enquiries and preparation, he set forth secretly on a now famous journey to the Holy Land of Buddhism. The reigning sovereign of China at the time was Tang Tai-tsung, (627–649), the great patron of art and letters, who had not as yet begun his conquest of Central Asia, and who in A.D. 643 sent an embassy to Emperor Harṣa Śilāditya (A.D. 606–647) of India. The Chinese Emperor refused the young man permission to visit the 'Western land' in view of the risks of the journey. But the monk paid no heed to the Imperial command. He braved the perils of the stony salt deserts of Gobi, evaded the vigilance of the Chinese frontier guards, hiding by day and travelling by night, and halted at the important oasis towns of Tun-huang, Turfan, Karashahr, and Kucha on the ancient caravan route, where he was struck as much by the piety with which the prevailing religion, Buddhism, was practised as by the material prosperity of a high culture. Then, after many adventures, he crossed the Hindukush at Bamiyan. Continuing his journey to the 'Western land' he descended to the valley of the Kabul, coming across hundreds of ruined stūpas and monasteries in Kapiśa, Lampaka, Gandhāra and Taxila, where the Ephthalite Hūṇas only two centuries before had devastated the glorious Kuṣāna civilization. Passing

through Śākala, whence the Hūṇa King Mihiragula had sent out his barbaric hordes to ravage Northern India, he made his way eastwards through the rich Gaṅgā-Yamunā doab.

The University of Nālandā

The young monk was Hiuen-Tsang, who answered everybody's friendly warning by reiterating his ardent desire to visit the Holy Land of Buddhism in spite of the perils of the journey: 'As you may see, I burn with longing to go and seek the Law of the Buddha and consult the ancient monuments in order to follow lovingly in his footsteps'. At last, in 637, after visiting the celebrated sites associated with the life and teaching of the Buddha in Magadha, the Chinese monk-pilgrim reached the monastic city of Nālandā. Nālandā was visited by Fa-Hien in the fourth century as the place where Sāriputta was born and obtained his Parinirvāṇa. Hiuen-Tsang mentions Śakrāditya, who is possibly Kumāra Gupta (A.D. 414–455), and Budha Gupta (A.D. 475–500) as being among the founders of the University. The famous Saṅghārāma, with its towers arranged symmetrically, its forest of pavilions and harmikās, and the many temple tops 'seemed to soar above the mists of the sky'. It was so lofty that 'one could watch the birth of winds on clouds'. 'Round the monasteries there flowed a winding stream of azure water, made more beautiful by blue lotus flowers, with wide-open calyxes; within the temple, beautiful karnikāra trees trailed their dazzling golden blossoms, and outside, groves of mango sheltered the dwellings with their thick shade'. The Chinese pilgrim's biographer continues: 'The monasteries of India can be counted today by the thousand, but there are none that equal this in dignity, wealth and height of buildings. The religious, both within and without, always reach a total of ten thousand, and they all follow the doctrine of the Mahāyāna. The adherents of the eighteen sects are all united there, and all kinds of works are studied, from the popular books, the Vedas, and other writings of the same kind, to medical works, the occult sciences and arithmetic. Within the monastery a hundred pulpits were filled every day, and the disciples zealously followed the lessons of their masters, without losing a moment'. 'Amidst all these virtuous men there naturally prevailed serious and strict habits of life, so that in the seven hundred years during which the monastery has been in existence, not a single individual has infringed the rules of discipline. The

king respects and honours it, and has put aside the revenue from a hundred towns in order to provide for the upkeep of the monks. Two hundred families send them regularly every day several hundred bushels of rice and large supplies of butter and milk. Hence the students ask nothing of any man, procuring without difficulty the four necessary things. Their progress in study and their brilliant successes are due to the liberality of the king'.

Hiuen-Tsang's Studies and Contributions to Buddhist Doctrine

Śīlabhadra, 106 years old and known as the 'Treasure of the Good Law', was then the Kulapati of Nālandā. Under him Hiuen-Tsang studied the Mahāyāna philosophy of idealism. This great teacher was the disciple of Dharmapāla, Nālandā's previous Kulapati, who died in about 560; and Dharmapāla, who belonged to Kāñchīpura, had in turn received his training under the famous logician Diṅnaga. Thus Hiuen-Tsang was fortunate in acquiring at Nālandā the entire legacy of Mahāyāna absolute idealism. 'The Master of Law', says his biographer, 'had studied the treatises of Nāgārjuna, and besides this was proficient in the understanding of Yogāchāra. He considered that the holy men who had composed these different works had each followed his own particular ideas without, however, being in opposition to one another. Even if we cannot bring them into perfect harmony, he would say, we have no right for that reason to consider them as contradictory to one another. The blame ought to be laid on those who commentate on these things. Such divergences of opinion are of no consequence for the faith'.

After his prolonged studies at Nālandā Hiuen-Tsang composed his Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi, the classic anthology of Yogāchāra texts and commentaries on them. The Chinese scholar also brought out translations of two other works by Vasubandhu, the Madhyānta-vibhaṅga-śāstra (A.D. 661) and the Viṃśikā-prakaraṇa (A.D. 661). On the basis of the idealist philosophy expounded by Asaṅga and Vasubandhu he succeeded in developing a new system of Chinese Buddhist philosophy of his own, which had a great influence on the development of Chinese thought. This was called in China Fa-hsiang (dharma-lakṣaṇa). According to this school all phenomena (Dharmas) of the world are unreal. The true reality is consciousness, or Ālayavijñāna, the matrix of the universe. The Fa-hsiang and its

Japanese counterpart, Hosso, comprise the only Buddhist scholastic school that has survived in these countries. A second school attributed to Hiuen-Tsang is known as Kiu-she (Koṣa). This name is derived from Vasubandhu's famous work the Abhidharma-koṣa, which served as the starting point of Hiuen-Tsang's metaphysical speculations. In Japan the school is called Kusha. A third school sometimes attributed to Hiuen-Tsang is called the Liu (Vinaya), through his Chinese disciple Tao-siuan. This school spread to Japan, where it is known under the name of Riotsu; it lays great stress on monastic discipline for the formation of character and the practice of meditation. It may also be pointed out that the Neo-Confucianist philosophy was greatly influenced by the doctrines of Vijñāna-vāda.

Hiuen-Tsang spent sixteen years in India, five years of study at Nālandā under the most celebrated Buddhist savants of the age, and eleven years in pilgrimages and visits to different centres of learning in Northern, Southern and Western India, from Valabhī to Kāmarūpa and from Kāśmira to Kāñchī. Like the Indian monk-pilgrim Kumārajiva of Kāśmira, Hiuen-Tsang played an invaluable role in the spread of Buddhism and Indian culture in the East. Kumārajiva, who had an intimate knowledge of both Sanskrit and Chinese, is described by Sylvain Levi as 'perhaps the greatest of all the translators who transmitted to China the spirit and the writings of Indian Buddhism'. Hiuen-Tsang, who also knew both Chinese and Sanskrit, the Brāhmanical and Buddhist philosophies and the canonical works of the Confucian School, was the greatest of the Chinese translators who brought about a perfect intimacy between Indian and Chinese thought. In India Hiuen-Tsang received the Sanskrit name Mahāyāna-deva from the Mahāyānists, and Mokṣāchārya from the Hinayānists.

The Destruction of Nālandā

Sino-Indian cultural intercourse was destined, however, soon to be rudely interrupted by the civil commotion in Northern India following the death of Harṣa (A.D. 647), which occurred within three years of Hiuen-Tsang's meeting with him at Prayāga, an event that marked the close of the Gupta renaissance and the beginning of internal disruption and Turko-Afghan aggression and vandalism. This was revealed to the Chinese pilgrim one night in a strange dream, in which he saw himself transported to the monastery at Nālandā. '(But) the

cells were empty and deserted, and the courtyards, which were dirty and disgusting, were full of buffaloes that had been tied up there. Neither monks nor novices were to be seen. The Master of the Law entered and saw on the fourth storey, above a courtyard, an individual of golden hue, whose grave and stern countenance shed a dazzling light'. This was the Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī, who seemed to beckon to Hiuen-Tsang, indicating a vast enveloping fire on the horizon that was destroying cities and towns. He predicted the untimely death of Harṣa within a few years, and the catastrophe which would overwhelm the country. The immense conflagration which the Chinese monk saw in his dream was a curious premonition of the devastating fire which, in A.D. 1204, during the Turko-Afghan invasion razed to the ground the most famous university of the East. Nālandā, with its architecture and sculpture, the marvels of the age, and its pupils coming from Middle Asia, China and the Indian colonies across the seas, was destined to become empty and deserted—and used by the villagers as a cattle pen! Yet it had a glorious and fruitful life of at least eight centuries.

The Traditional Divisions of Indian Learning

In the Jain canonical texts, the Nandī and the Anuogadāra (Anuyogadvāra), we find the following secular (laukika) branches of knowledge enumerated. The list begins with the Bhāratam (Mahābhārata) and the Rāmāyaṇam, but refers among others to Koḍillayaṃ (Kauṭilya's Arthaśāstra), Ghoḍayamuhaṃ (the Kāma-sūtra of Ghoṭakamukha, a predecessor of Vātsyāyana), Vaisesiyaṃ (the Vaiśeṣika system of philosophy), Buddha Sāsanaṃ (the doctrine of the Buddha), Kāvilaṃ (the system of Kapila), Logāyataṃ (Lokāyata, the philosophy of materialism), Purāṇa, Grammar (Vāgaranaṃ), Bhāgavayam (Bhāgavata Texts), Pātaṃjalī (Patañjali), Mathematics (Gaṇitaṃ), Drama (nādayāī, nāṭakāni), and lastly the four Vedas, together with the Aṅgas and Upāṅgas.

For ages the hermitages in the forests had been the centres of education and learning in India. It was in the sylvan hermitages of the Upper Ganges Valley that the major Upaniṣads and the Brāhmaṇas were composed. With the spread of Buddhism and Jainism their monks also used to teach in the hermitages, away from cities and towns. In periods of arid philosophical and religious controversy the journeyings of itinerant scholars and monks, and the intellectual

tournaments at the hermitages of the sages and the courts of the learned kings and nobility, crystallised new intellectual movements. We get glimpses of these in the entire Brāhmaṇa literature, the Arthaśāstra of Kauṭilya, the Milindapañho, and the Kādambarī. The traditional divisions of knowledge as these came down from the post-Vedic age were: (1) Ānvīkṣakī, comprising the philosophical systems, such as Sāṅkhya, Yoga (Vaiśeṣika) and Lokāyata; (2) Trayī, or the three Vedas, along with the Vedāṅgas; (3) the three Vārtā, or the arts of living, concerned with agriculture, cattle rearing and trade; (4) Daṇḍanīti, or the art of politics. One of the lists in the Mahābhārata gives the following subjects of study: Aṣṭāṅga-āyurveda (Medicine, with its eight branches), Ṛigveda, Sāmaveda, Yajurveda, Atharvaveda, Sarvaśāstrāṇi, Itihāsas, Upavedas, Vedāṅgas, Vāṇī of seven kinds, Sāmas, Stutiśāstras (a treatise on hymns), various kinds of Gāthā literature, Bhāṣyas (bhāṣyāni tarkayuktāni), Nāṭakas, Kāvyas, and Kathākhyāyikās (ii, II, 25).

According to the Baudhāyana Gṛihya-sūtra (i, 7, 2–8) the traditional grades of learning were: (1) Brāhmaṇa, one who, after Upanayana and the practice of vows of brahmacharya, has studied a little of the Veda; (2) Śrotriya, one who has studied one Vedic Śākhā; (3) Anūchāna, one who has studied the Aṅgas; (4) Ṛiṣi-kalpa, one who has studied the Kalpas; (5) Bhrūṇa, one who has studied Sūtra and Pravachana; (6) Ṛiṣi, one who has studied all the four Vedas; (7) Deva, one who has achieved more progress.

The Technical Arts

Buddhism, apart from its metaphysical interests, led to a great emphasis on education in the arts and crafts, medicine and surgery. The University of Taxila was the most renowned seat of learning for many centuries in the East, especially for medicine, surgery and the various technical arts, including the military arts, and it attracted students from far and near. The upsurge of pity and compassion for the unfortunate, the diseased and the disabled associated with the spread of Buddhism led to the multiplication of animal shelters and hospitals in the country. Fa-Hien (A.D. 405–411) makes the following observations concerning hospitals in the city of Pāṭaliputra. 'The nobles and householders have founded hospitals within the city, to which the poor of all countries, the destitute, crippled and diseased, may repair. They receive every kind of requisite help gratuitously.

Physicians inspect their diseases and, according to their cases, order them food and drink, medicine and decoctions, everything in fact which may contribute to their ease. When cured they depart at their convenience'.

The Lalita-vistara enumerates the following subjects of study as making up humanistic education, apart from the 64 applied arts or Kalās: (1) Gaṇanā (Gaṇitam in the Samavāya), Arithmetic; (2) Saṅkhyā (the science of numbers); (3) Veda; (4) Itihāsa; (5) Purāṇa; (6) Nighaṇṭu (Lexicography); (7) Nirukta (Etymology); (8) Nigama (Revealed scripture); (9) Śikṣā (Phonetics); (10) Chhandas (Metrics); (11) Jyotiṣa (Astronomy); (12) Vyākaraṇa (Grammar); (13) Yajña-kalpa (the Kalpa-sūtras giving rules for conducting sacrifices); (14) Sāṅkhya; (15) Yoga; (16) Vaiśeṣika; (17) Veśika (a system of philosophy); (18) Bārhaspatya (the philosophical system of Bṛihaspati, the Chārvāka or Lokāyata philosophy); (19) Hetuvidyā (Nyāya philosophy); (20) Arthavidyā or Ājīvajñānaṃ (Economics); (21) Kāvya (Belles lettres); (22) Grantha-rachitaṃ (the art of the writer, or authorship); (23) Ākhyātaṃ (the art of story-telling); (24) Hāsyam (the art of the humorist).

According to the Milindapañho, written in about the second century B.C., the subjects of study included: the four Vedas, the Itihāsas, the Purāṇas, lexicography, prosody, phonology, grammar, etymology, astrology, astronomy, and the six vedāṅgas; the interpretation of omens, dreams, and signs; the prognostications to be drawn from the passage of comets, thunder, the conjunction of planets, the fall of meteors, earthquakes, conflagrations, and signs in the heavens and the earth; the study of the eclipses of the sun and moon, arithmetic, and casuistry; and the interpretation of omens to be drawn from dogs, deer and rats, mixtures of liquids, sounds and cries of birds (iv, 3, 26).

The medical training comprised education in the theories concerning the diagnosis and treatment of every disease, based on the knowledge of medicinal herbs; and in surgery, experience in the administration of emetics, purges and oily enemas; training in holding the lancet in cutting, marking or piercing, in extracting darts, in cleansing wounds, in causing them to dry up, in the application of sharp and stinging ointments, and in cauterisation. I-tsing mentions that an elementary course in medical science was compulsory for all, including those who intended to be monks; and he remarks in support of the idea: 'Is it not a sad thing that sickness prevents the pursuit of one's duty and vocation? Is it not beneficial if people can help others as well as themselves by the study of medicine?'

The Routine of Life and Study at Nālandā

The subjects and methods of education as well as the routine of life at the famous University of Nālandā have been revealed to us by Hiuen-Tsang and I-tsing, both of whom lived at this seat of learning for several years in the seventh century A.D. The following brief account is based on their descriptions. The total number of pupils at Nālandā at the time of Hiuen-Tsang was 10,000, while the teachers numbered 1,510. The University attracted scholars from China, Korea, Mongolia, Japan, Tibet, Tokhara and the East Indies. Many of them obtained Sanskrit names, which are mentioned by I-tsing: Śrīdeva from China, Āryavarma from Korea, and Bodhidharma from Tokhara. To the Nālandā Saṅghārāma flocked the best talent from every part of India, far and near. Every new entrant had to pass a test conducted by experts in religious controversy. 'Of those from abroad who wished to enter the Schools of Discussion, the majority, beaten by the difficulties of the problems, withdrew; but those who were deeply versed in old and modern learning were admitted, only two or three out of ten succeeding'. The students at Nālandā all studied the Mahāyāna, and also the works of the eighteen sects; and not only these, but even ordinary works, such as the Vedas and the other books, the Hetuvidyā, the Śabdavidyā, the Chikitsāvidyā, the works on Magic or Atharvaveda, and the Sāṅkhya. Besides these they thoroughly investigate the 'miscellaneous works'. The Buddhist Universities by no means confined themselves to Buddhist learning; all branches of knowledge, sacred and secular, Brāhmanical and Buddhist, were assiduously cultivated.

Both the Chinese scholars give an account of the course of general and elementary education that led up to higher education in the monasteries. Children began their education at the age of six with the first book, called Siddhirastu (May success attend the child's efforts), which gives 49 letters of the alphabet. The Sūtra of Pāṇini, containing 1,000 ślokas, is the second book, 'which the children begin to learn when they are eight years old, and can repeat in eight months' time'. Then follows the study of Dhātu and Kāśikāvṛitti. With grammar begins all learning, usually systematised under five Vidyās or branches of learning, namely: (1) Śabdavidyā (grammar and lexicography); (2) Śilpasthānavidyā (arts); (3) Chikitsāvidyā (medicine); (4) Hetuvidyā (logic); and (5) Adhyātmavidyā (philosophy).

The Universities were open to all. Those who were not seeking education for monkhood were called mānavas and Brahmachāris, and

they either brought their own boarding expenses or did some manual work for the University. The routine of work in the University was governed by an officer called Karmadāna, who specified the kind of manual work that each should do. Exemption could be earned only by a demonstration of proficiency in some subject or other. On the other hand, the monastery supplied its resident students with food and clothing from the produce of its lands, which were often ear-marked for the purpose by their donors. The Vinaya regulations forbade any monk to handle money. As the result of gifts the Universities owned much property, which enabled them to provide free education for their alumni, and to supply them with food, clothes, bedding and medicines. Nālandā, for instance, had extensive lands donated by 'kings of many generations, and containing more than two hundred villages'. The land was cultivated by the monastery's own staff of servants, or by other labourers under the supervision of officers called Vihāra-pālas. Monk students whom the Vinaya rules prohibited from tilling land on their own account could do so for the Vihāra. The Universities often received gifts of precious stones to defray the cost of copying manuscripts. The diet consisted of rice-water in the morning, rice, butter, milk, fruits and sweet melons in the noon, and a light meal in the evening.

The monk-students following the course of education in the monasteries were graded as follows: (1) Śramanera (the lowest grade); (2) Dahara (small bhikṣu), (3) Sthavira; (4) Upādhyāya; and (5) Bahuśruta (the highest rank).

'All possible and impossible doctrines', to use the words of I-tsing, were taught and expounded in these medieval universities, whose freedom of discussion is a magnificent testimony to the abiding principle, long accepted by India in the realm of thought, that the first condition for the quest of truth is liberty. Brāhmanism, Buddhism and Jainism, with all their different schools and sects, were most freely discussed and criticised by the teachers and students alike. 'Learning and discussing, they found the day too short; day and night they admonished each other, juniors and seniors mutually helping each other to perfection'. 'When a man's renown has reached a high level, he convokes an assembly for discussion. He judges of the talent or otherwise of those who take part in it, and if one of the assembly distinguishes himself by refined language, subtle investigation, profundity, and severe logic, he is mounted on an elephant covered with precious ornaments, and conducted by a retinue of admirers to the gate of the monastery. If, on the contrary, one of the

members breaks down in his argument, uses inelegant phrases, or violates a rule of logic, they daub him with mud and cast him into a ditch'.

In each monastery a clepsydra was installed for the reckoning of time, and drums were beaten and conches sounded to announce the hours; the day's work of the Vihāra consisting of eight hours. The forenoon and afternoon periods each comprised two hours, and the noon period four hours. It is remarkable that all matters of discipline were left to be managed by the student-monks themselves. The allocation of rooms according to seniority and the trial and punishment of offences against the Saṅgha were decided by the entire body of scholars. Many personal services were rendered spontaneously by the pupils to their teachers, including the supply of water, towels and tooth-sticks, the arrangement of their clothes, and the sweeping of their apartments.

The spirit of the Saṅgha is admirably portrayed in the Visuddhimagga of Buddhaghoṣa, which contains a paean on the blessed life of the monk, who dwells in bliss and tastes the nectar of piety. Buddhaghoṣa, a native of the Andhra country, visited Ceylon and Thaton at the close of the fourth century A.D.; and the Visuddhimagga, which was composed in Ceylon, is still honoured as a sacred text of the Theravāda. Robes, a bowl, a lodging place, and medicines for the sick are the only belongings permitted to a Śramaṇa of the Saṅgha.

Hiuen-Tsang's Apotheosis

The catholicity reigning in the field of religious and philosophical disputation in India is abundantly indicated by the invitation of Hiuen-Tsang to the grand tournament of philosophy which the Poet-Emperor Harṣa Śilāditya arranged in the imperial city of Kanauj. There the Emperor accorded him the highest honour, granted to whoever scored an intellectual victory. 'He gave the Master of the Law 10,000 pieces of gold, 30,000 pieces of silver, and 100 garments of fine cotton. He ordered one of his officers to have a large elephant richly equipped and covered with costly trappings, and then he begged the Master of Law to mount it. Finally, he ordered the most eminent of his dignitaries to form his train, and to make the round of the people in this fashion, announcing aloud that he had expounded the principles of truth, and had established them securely, without

being defeated by anyone. Holding the Master of the Law by his religious habit, and addressing the multitude he cried: "The Chinese Master has brilliantly demonstrated the doctrine of Mahāyāna, and overthrown all the errors of the dissenters. For eighteen days there has not been found a single individual bold enough to argue with him. Such a triumph must be made known to all!"'

Ten years after his return to China, Hiuen Tsang wrote to Jñānaprabha, a great scholar at Nālandā, who had sent him a present of a pair of white robes, 'to show he was not forgotten'. Śīlabhadra had died meanwhile and Hiuen-Tsang, after regretting the vast distance that separated their countries, expresses his great sorrow at hearing the news. In his letter he describes the progress he had made in propagating the true law in China. He had translated some thirty volumes, including the Yogāchāra-bhūmi-śāstra, and hoped to complete the translation of the Koṣa (Vasubandhu's Abhidharmakoṣavāykhyā) and the Nyāyānusāra-śāstra (of Saṅghabhadra) that year. The reigning emperor, a pious ruler of the great T'ang dynasty, was giving the work his full support, to the extent of writing a preface and instructing his officers concerning the circulation of the texts. Hiuen-Tsang ends his letter by requesting replacements for some sacred works that he lost in crossing the Indus, and begs the recipient not to disdain the small gifts he is sending.

Some two hundred years later, a Buddhist traveller from Japan visited India and reported: 'In a large number of Buddhist temples in Middle India Hiuen-Tsang was represented in paintings, with his hemp shoes, spoon, and chop sticks, mounted on multi-coloured clouds. The monks paid respect to the image on every fast day.'

Far from being forgotten, Hiuen-Tsang was thus apotheosised.

The Lure of the Holy Land of Buddhism

Of the many Chinese monks, scholars and pilgrims who visited India across the centuries, impelled by the desire to visit the holy places of Buddhism and learn the true Law, only a few, however, survived the hazards of the journey and returned to China with Buddhist scriptures and works of art. I-tsing (634–713) sadly relates:

'There were some who crossed the Purple-coloured Barrier (the Great Wall) in the west and marched alone; others crossed the wide sea and travelled without companions. There was not one of them who did not give his whole thought to the Sacred Remains, and who

did not prostrate his whole body in offering the ritual honours; all looked forward to returning and acknowledging the Four Benefactions by spreading hope.

However, the triumphal path was strewn with difficulties; the Holy places were far away and vast. Of dozens who brought forth leaves and flowers, and of several who made an attempt, there was scarcely one who bore any fruit or produced any real results, and few who completed their task.

The reason for this was the immensity of the stony deserts of the Land of the Elephant (India), the great rivers, and the brilliance of the sun, which pours forth its burning heat; or else the towering waves heaved up by the giant fish, the abysses and the waters that rise and swell as high as the heavens. When marching alone beyond the Iron Gates (between Samarqand and Bactria) one wandered amongst the ten thousand mountains, and fell to the bottom of the precipices; when sailing alone beyond the Columns of Copper (south of Tong-king), one crossed the thousand deltas and lost one's life. . . . That is how it is that those who set out were over fifty in number, while those who survived were only a handful of men'.

In his Study of Chinese History, Liang Chi-Chao gives a full and authentic account of the early Chinese pilgrim-scholars who visited India, and his findings certainly confirm I-tsing. After much research he traced nearly two hundred pilgrims who attempted the journey between the end of the third century and the eighth; the highest numbers being in the fifth and seventh centuries. Out of these, only 42 successfully reached India, completed their studies, and returned home. Of the rest, many failed to get so far, and 37 are known to have died on the journey, either going or returning. This high mortality is understandable when one considers the nature of the journey and the almost insurmountable difficulties that attended travel in those days. For instance, when Hiuen-Tsang passed through the Yu Men Gate and debouched upon the Mo-Ho Yen Desert, he recorded, 'Here I can hardly proceed, so thirsty am I, having had not a drop of water for five days and four nights. I may die at any moment . . .' In the limitless expanse of the desert, he and other lone wayfarers followed no guide but the bleached bones of men and animals lying along the ill-defined trail. As for the sea voyage, it was beset by all sorts of dangers, and voyagers had to beg for their lives from wind and waves. When Fa-Hien returned to China by the sea-route, his ship was caught in a furious storm, and he had to divest himself of everything except his clothes and his collection of Buddhist scriptures and images.

Agrahāras and Ghaṭikās

Buddhism, due to the stress it laid on monachism, developed the famous monastic universities of Nālandā, Valabhi, Vikramaśīla, Jālandhara, Puṣkarāvatī and Kāñchīpura, which became celebrated centres of learning. Brāhmanism in the Gupta age developed smaller but equally famous centres of learning, away from the cities and towns, in richly endowed maṭhas, or colleges, in places of pilgrimage. These were called Agrahāra villages, and they were endowed with lands which the Brāhmaṇa teachers and students enjoyed for their maintenance. It was usual for the state as well as rich merchants and nobles to offer such donations for the encouragement of learning. Similarly, South India developed Ghaṭikās located in the temples of the famous cities. In the villages flourishing lipiśālās taught the alphabet and grammar. Technical education was imparted in the workshops of the guilds and master artisans, which admitted craftsmen to apprenticeship and training. Thus an elaborate system of education at different levels, in both villages and cities, kept alive the spirit of intellectual scrutiny and exploration in India through the ages.

CHAPTER XI

BUDDHISM AS THE BUILDER OF ASIAN UNITY

The Importance of the Central Asian Caravan Routes

THE colonial expansion of India beyond the Himalayas and the deserts of Taklamakan in the north, and across the seas to Dvīpāntara Bhārata in the east, was a silent, imperceptible process that went on for at least two millennia, and one to which world history has not done adequate justice. Indian culture, borne along the high-roads of Central Asia and China and the routes of Pūrvasāgara, brought about a unification of Asia that lasted for many centuries. The art of Mathurā, Amarāvati and Ajantā, and the Buddhist universities of Khotan, Kāśmira, Nālandā, Anurādhapura and Śrī Vijaya, were the chief vehicles of this slow infiltration of the highly developed Indian civilization into East and South-eastern Asia. The establishment of the Kuṣāṇa Empire, extending from Gandhāra and Sue Vihāra to Banārasa, the development of trade in luxury goods, such as ivories, muslins and silks, with the Roman and Chinese Empires, and the rise of Mahāyāna Buddhism are among the factors that lent impetus to the Indianisation of the whole of Middle Asia for five centuries, from the beginning of the Christian era until the entry of the Hūṇas into Middle Asia. The Tarim basin came under the suzerainty of the White Hūṇas at the beginning of the sixth century, as Sung Yun recorded (A.D. 519). Then, after three decades, the Turks obtained ascendancy in this region. The great T'ang dynasty rose to power, succeeding the Sui in China, in A.D. 618, and by A.D. 660 had extended its empire from the Altai to beyond the Hindu Kush, thus initiating after an interruption of about a century the most glorious period in the diffusion of Buddhism and Indian culture in Central Asia and China. With the occupation of Khorasan, Gandhāra and parts of Middle Asia by the House of Ghazni, which extended its rule from the Oxus to the Indus at the end of the tenth

century, this age-long fruitful process of acculturisation along the Asian high-roads was jettisoned. For the next five centuries, during which the Asian caravan routes were controlled by Muslim states, Sino-Indian intercourse had to depend on missionary enterprise by the sea-route across the second India, or Dvīpāntara, from Sumatra to Kambuja, where Indian civilization met the Chinese half-way, in the Eastern waters.

The age of the great Kuṣāṇas saw the spread of Buddhism and Sanskrit culture along the broad corridor of the Tarim basin, fringed by the two great 'silk routes' connecting China with India and Western Asia: the northern route through Taxila, Kapiśa, Kashgar, Kucha, Karashahr (Agnideśa), Kizil, Turfan (Bharuka), Hami, and Ansi; and the southern route through Yarkand, Khotan, Dandan Oilik, Niya, Miran, and Lob Nor; the two routes finally meeting at Tun-huang on the western frontier of China. Here the famous group of 182 frescoed caves were built, popularly known as the Caves of the Thousand Buddhas. Indian civilization flourished along the 900-mile string of oases on both the northern and southern silk-routes; the latter being held by the Kuṣāṇas, who under Kaniṣka waged a successful war against the Chinese in Central Asia and obtained Chinese Princes as hostages.

Hindu Oasis Colonies on the Asian High-roads

Among the ancient rulers of the Tarim basin we come across a number of Indian names: Kustana, Vijita-Dharma and Vijita-kirti at Khotan; Suvarṇa-puṣpa, Hari-puṣpa, and Suvarṇa-deva at Kuchi; and Indrārjuna and Chandrārjuna at Karashahr. The Indian colonies and kingdoms also bore Sanskrit names or their adaptations: Śailadeśa (Kashgar), Chokuka (Yarkand), Bharuka (Uch-Turfan), Kuchi (Kucha), Agnideśa (Karashahr), and Turapanni (Turfan) on the northern caravan route; and Kusthāna (Kustana or Khotan), Chadota (Niya), and Chalmada (Shan-Shan) on the southern route. The scripts used in Khotan, Kuchi, and the adjacent territory were varieties of the Indian scripts, Brāhmī and Kharoṣṭhī. Khotan, Kashgar, Kuchi, Karashahr and Turfan, with their famous monasteries and caves, became the main centres of Buddhist learning and missionary enterprise between the third and seventh centuries. The diverse peoples of the Tarim (Sanskrit Sītā) basin, speaking a variety of tongues, Sanskrit, Chinese, Syriac, Sogdian, Turkish, Tokharian

and Khotanese, were all moulded by the pattern of Indian culture from Kāśmīra, Gandhāra and Bamiyan through the influence of Mahāyāna Buddhism, whose devotionalism and emphasis on virtuous living were entirely congruent with the needs of a fluid, cosmopolitan oasis culture springing up on one of the principal highways of world commerce. India imported from China raw silk, and exported muslins, silk, ivories and other luxury products. The entire area became dotted with markets and fairs as well as with monasteries and grottoes. Like the caves at Ajantā, Bāgh, Kārle and Bamiyan, the caves in the hills near Kucha and Tun-huang attracted scholars, monks and pilgrims, and became important Buddhist centres. At Miran, Dandan Oilik, Niya and other places, as at Bamiyan and Fondukistan, there are Buddhist frescoes in which the sinuous lines, warm colours and dynamic rhythms of Ajantā mingle harmoniously with Iranian and Chinese features. The Gomatī Vihāra at Khotan, the Āścharya Vihāra at Kuchi, and the Nava Saṅghārāma at Balkh vied in learning and devotion with the celebrated Kaniṣka Vihāra in Gandhāra and the Kuṇḍala-vana Vihāra at Jālandhar. From the Khotan monastery came new Buddhist texts, written in Sanskrit and Prākrit as well as in local languages. The processions bearing images of the Buddha at Kuchi and Khotan resembled those in India. The colossal Buddha statues at Kuchi are similar to those of Bamiyan. Behind the great Mahāyāna missionary enterprise, as the source of its driving force, were the monasteries of Kāśmīra, Uḍḍiyāna and Gandhāra, the principal centres of Buddhist and Sanskrit learning from the beginning of the millennium to the fourth century A.D., when Nālandā rose to prominence.

Kumārajīva, the Greatest of the Indian Missionary Scholars

It was at the monastery of Kucha that Kumārajīva, who first studied Brāhmanical philosophy in Kāśmīra and Kashgar and Mahāyāna Buddhism in Gokkuka, won celebrity as the most famous Buddhist scholar in Middle Asia. In A.D. 401, as the sequel to a Chinese invasion of Kucha, he was taken as a prize prisoner to China, and accepted by the Chinese Emperor as the royal spiritual preceptor. Kumārajīva learnt Chinese with great alacrity. His profound knowledge of Buddhist philosophy and proficiency in both Sanskrit and Chinese made him the most successful among the many translators of Sanskrit Buddhist works into Chinese. From A.D. 401

to 413, when he died, he translated as many as 106 such texts, including the Saddharmapuṇḍarīka, the Sutrālaṅkāra, the biographies of Nāgārjuna and Aśvaghoṣa, and several works of the Mādhyamika school. His translation of the Vajrachchhedika, or the Diamond Cutter, did more to popularise Buddhism among the Chinese literati than all other texts put together.

India knows nothing of some of her greatest men and has forgotten Kumārajīva, who is certainly the greatest figure in the story of India's cultural expansion. His father, Kumārāyana, was an Indian, but his mother, Jīvā, was a princess from Kucha. Soon after he was born, she became a Buddhist nun, and later, when she returned to Kucha, Kumārajīva accompanied her. He acquired the widest celebrity in India and Central Asia in his time, and counted among his disciples such great Chinese scholars as Seng-chao (384–414) and Tao-sheng (died 434). These two popularised the Indian ideas of the levels of truth and the universality of mind, or the Buddha nature, in metaphysics, and the law of karma in ethics. The modern Chinese philosopher Fung Yu-Lan observes: 'The idea of the Universal Mind is a contribution of India to Chinese philosophy. Before the introduction of Buddhism there was in Chinese philosophy only the mind, but not the Mind. The Tao of the Taoists is the mystery of mysteries, as Lai Tzu put it, yet it is not Mind. After the period (of the introduction of Buddhism) there is in Chinese philosophy, not only mind, but also Mind'.

A Millennium of Missionary Enterprises

From the beginning of the fifth to the thirteenth century A.D. a whole galaxy of Indian monk-scholars travelled to China to translate Buddhist texts and spread Buddhist learning, and hundreds of monasteries sprang up. Many also went simply as missionaries. Their names and activities have been listed by P. C. Bagchi. Before them, however, to blaze the trail at the beginning of the millennium, were the earliest Buddhist missionaries in China, Kaśyapa Mātaṅga and Dharmaratna (in about A.D. 65), and, among others, Dharmarakṣa (A.D. 284) and Buddhabhadra (A.D. 398). For a whole millennium Indian missionaries poured into China. Apart from the Central Asian routes, and the sea route from Tāmralipti via the ports of the Malay peninsula, Sumatra, and Java to Tonkin, the principal south-eastern port of China, there were the routes through the

valleys of the Chindwin and the Irrawaddy to Kunming, and also the Nepalese route through Tibet. Like their Chinese counterparts, the monk-pilgrims to India, the Indian missionaries braved great perils and hardships on their journeys, and many died abroad unwept and unhonoured, or fell victims to persecution and mob violence.

The most outstanding monks to follow Kumārajīva (A.D. 401 to 413) were: Saṅghavarmī, the translator of the Mahīśāsaka Vinaya, who went from Ceylon to China in A.D. 420; Guṇavarman, whose fame as a missionary in Ceylon and Java induced the Chinese Emperor to invite him to Nanking, where the Jetavana-vihāra was constructed for him to preach in (A.D. 431); Guṇabhadra, the translator of the Saṁyuktāgama, who went to China from Ceylon in A.D. 435; Bodhidharma, who 'came floating on the sea to Pan-yu' (Canton), in A.D. 470, and travelled over a great part of China during the reign of the devout Emperor Wu, disseminating the Buddhist doctrine of meditation (Ch'an), and paving the way for a rapprochement between the Northern and Southern schools; Saṅghabhadra, who translated the Sāmantapāsādikā in A.D. 488; Paramārtha, a native of Ujjayinī, who went to Nanking in A.D. 548 and translated about 500 works, including Aśvaghoṣa's Mahāyāna-Śraddhotpāda, the Life of Vasubandhu, and the Tarkaśāstra; Jinagupta, who became spiritual preceptor to an Emperor of the T'ang dynasty, and translated into Chinese thirty-seven original Sanskrit works (second half of the sixth century A.D.); Bodhiruchi, who was sent to China in A.D. 693 from the court of a Chālukya king and was highly honoured by the Emperor, who set up a board of Indian and Chinese scholars to translate Mahāyāna works, and himself took down notes of the translations; and Kumāraghoṣa, a scholar monk from Bengal, who became the spiritual guide of the Śailendra Emperors of Sumatra and Java (eighth century).

Other important teachers who carried the torch of Buddhist religion and culture to China were: Buddhajīva (A.D. 423), who went from Kāṣmīra; Dharmakṣema (A.D. 414–433) and Guṇabhadra (A.D. 435–468), from middle India; Jñānabhadra and Yaśogupta (sixth century), from Bengal and Assam; Buddhibhadra, from Jalālābād; Dharmagupta (A.D. 500), from Kānyakubja; Gautama Dharmajñāna, who was appointed Governor of a District in China (A.D. 577); and Vajrabodhi (A.D. 710–732), who was educated at Nālandā, went from Ceylon to China in A.D. 710, and preached in China the mystical Vajrayāna form of Buddhism.

It is abundantly evident that every part of India shared in the arduous, marvellous march of the religion, art, and philosophy of India. Even batches of Buddhist nuns (Bhikṣuṇīs) travelled to China from Ceylon, in A.D. 433, in a ship called Nandi, and established their order in China. As the Chronicler of Ceylon observes in relating one of the triumphs of Buddhist missionary enterprise, 'Moved by the desire to convert the world, with the world's welfare at heart, who would be slothful and indifferent?' According to the Chinese-Buddhist Encyclopaedia the number of Indian monks at the Chinese court reached its peak at the beginning of the eleventh century, at a time when Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni was looting the temples and sacred cities of their homeland. Some of the monks seem to have adopted Chinese names. By the middle of the century, however, due to the reaction of the Chinese literati against the foreign religion, there was a sudden decline in the influence of Buddhism in China, and hence in the number of Buddhist monks. The last Indian monk recorded to have reached China from India was Che-ki-siang, who came from Western India in 1053. In India itself, meanwhile, the steady influx of Chinese scholars, missionaries and pilgrims continued for several centuries. In fact it increased considerably in the hey-day of the Sung Empire, from the tenth to the thirteenth centuries.

The Spread of Buddhism in Asia

From China Buddhism spread to Korea, in A.D. 372, and thence made its first entry into Japan, in A.D. 538 In A.D. 604 Buddhism was accepted by the Prince Regent Shōtoku Taishi as the national religion of Nippon, and soon temples, monasteries and hospitals came to be built. The famous temple of Horyuji at Nara was constructed in A.D. 607. A Japanese monk, Dorho, became one of the chief disciples of Hiuen-Tsang, and spread the doctrine of Yogāchāra in that country. By the seventh century almost the whole of Central and East Asia had come under the spell of Buddhism. New waves of Buddhist art, of Gupta, Pāla and Pallava inspiration, spread to Middle and South-East Asia. The mysterious forms of the graceful and profoundly compassionate Bodhisattvas of the Mahāyāna heaven, with hands displaying Indian mudrās and holding Indian lotuses, created by the art of Ajantā, Bāgh and Amarāvatī, and the rhapsodies of the Mahāyāna texts, were now familiar throughout the

length and breadth of a whole continent, and aroused faith and devotion among the common people.

India's contact with Mongolia began in the eighth century A.D., when an Indian monk, Prājña, took part in the translation of Buddhist texts into the Mongol language. In the extensive Mongol Empire established by Jengiz Khan, Buddhism, Mohammedanism, and Nestorian Christianity throve side by side. The grandson of Jengiz Khan, Kuryak, became a disciple of the Buddhist monk scholar Śākya Paṇḍita, who came from the Śākya monastery of Tibet. Later on two of his nephews took up Buddhist missionary work in Mongolia. One of them, Phags-pa (1239–1289), attended a Parliament of Religions convened by Kublai Khan (1259–1294) at Karakorum, and defeated the Taoist monks in debate, whereupon Kublai Khan accepted Tibetan Buddhism as the state religion of the Mongol Empire, and appointed Phags-pa to be Rājaguru, or head, of the Buddhist Church in the vast Mongol Empire, and also his Viceroy in the three provinces of Tibet. Phags-pa was an active proselytiser, and soon Buddhism became the most popular religion among the Mongols. Kublai welcomed a gift of relics of the Buddha from the ruler of Ceylon. As the Khan's Kuo-she or Rājaguru, Phags-pa devised a common alphabet for the various languages of the vast empire; he thus dreamt of a new Asian unity under the regime of Kublai, with one religion, one language and one culture—a dream that was shattered by the disintegration of the Mongol Empire immediately after the Emperor's death. Regarding Buddhism Kublai made this remark: 'The fingers come out of the palm of the hand; the Buddhist doctrine is like the palm, the other religions are like the fingers'.

In Tibet the Emperor Srong-tsan Gampo (A.D. 600–650), who overran Northern India along with Upper Burma and Chinese Turkestan, introduced the Indian alphabet and script from Kāśmīra and built the first Buddhist temples in that country. In the middle of the eighth century (A.D 747.) Padmasambhava, who was born in the famous centre of Buddhist Tāntrikism, Uḍḍiyāna (identified with the Swat Valley by some and with Vajrayoginī in the Dacca district by others), and who studied at the University of Nālandā, went to Tibet and preached Vajrayāna Buddhism. He stayed there for thirty years and was responsible for the codification of civil and religious law. Padmasambhava was later deified. In the middle of the eleventh century Atiśa, or Dīpaṅkara Śrījñāna, the famous abbot of Vikramaśila monastery, visited the country at the invitation of the Tibetan

king. Atiśa's superior was most unwilling to let him go, fearing for the morale of the monasteries of Magadha in his absence, especially in view of the threats from the Ghaznavid Turks (Mahmud of Ghazni seized Kanauj in 1018 and sacked Somnath in 1026). It was stipulated therefore that Atiśa should return to Vikramaśīla within three years; but in the event he stayed in Tibet from 1040 until his death thirteen years later, in 1053. He preached the Mahāyāna and helped to restore Buddhism to an elevated plane, purging it of its magical elements. He visited Nepal on his way, and was accompanied by Vinayadhara, Gya-tson, Bhūmigarbha, and a prince-disciple, Bhūmisaṅgha, from Western India. Other celebrated visitors from India were the distinguished Śīlabhadra and Abhayakaragupta. Intercourse between the monasteries of Nālandā, Vikramaśīla, Jagaddala and Odantapurī, and Tibet and Nepal, was intimate and fruitful for many centuries, and the currents of Mahāyāna, Vajrayāna, Sahaja, and Tāntrikism have left an indelible impress on the religion and culture of both these countries.

Apart from the borderland regions, Nepal, Tibet, Bhutan and Sikkim, where Indian culture has always dominated the life, manners and thought of the peoples, the spread of Buddhism by way of the Mid-Asian caravan routes to Middle Asia, China, Mongolia, Korea and Japan, and by the sea-route to Further India, was a unique cultural movement that brought about and maintained the unity of Asian civilization for many centuries. The movement gained impetus with the convention of the Buddhist Council at the Kuṇḍalavana-vihāra in about A.D. 100, though this was preceded by the missionary enterprise of Kaśyapa Mātaṅga and Dharmaratna in A.D. 65. In A.D. 335 a landmark may be said to have been reached with the Imperial proclamation that made Buddhism a state religion in China. This stated: 'The Buddha is a god worshipped in foreign countries. He may not be worthy to receive offerings from the Emperors of China and from the Chinese. But I who was born in the frontier province have the good fortune to be a ruler of China. In regard to religious duties I must abide by the customs of my people. Though the Buddha is a foreign god, it is in the fitness of things that I should worship him. It is a pity that the same old laws of ancient times should be followed even now. When a thing is found perfect and faultless, why should people still cling to the customs of the ancient dynasties? My people are called barbarians. I grant them the privilege of worshipping the Buddha and adopting the Buddhist faith if they wish to do so'.

Chinese Schools of Buddhism

The hey-day of the influence of Buddhism in China extended from the visit of Kumārajīva at the beginning of the fifth century to the end of the T'ang dynasty at the beginning of the tenth, though various sects and schools of Buddhism continued to thrive in China until about the eleventh century. As many as ten Chinese schools (Tsung) of Buddhism sprang up, based upon one or other of the Mahāyāna texts, such as the Saddharmapuṇḍarīka, the Abhidharmakoṣa, the Avataṃśaka Sūtra, the Sukhāvatī-Vyūha, the Satya-siddhi Śāstra, and the Vinaya. One of the most important was the contemplative (Dhyāna) school founded by Bodhidharma, who taught in China for about fifty years, from A.D 470 to 520. His teaching was based on the Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra, and his sect was at one time known as the Laṅkā school, though more commonly as Ch'an, a corruption of Dhyāna. He was the son of the prince of Kāñchī and obtained his initiation into the Dhyāna form of Buddhism in the Indian Archipelago. In China he was known as Ta-mo (Dharma) and in Japan, where his teaching spread in the twelfth century under the name of Zen, as Daruma. Zen Buddhism still has many thousands of adherents today.

Legend has grown up around Bodhidharma and many miracles are attributed to him. In Chinese paintings he is represented as an ascetic with a beard, carrying a twig on his shoulder, from which hangs a sandal, and gazing silently and steadfastly at the void. His eminence is indicated by the gift of Gautama the Tathāgata's robe and begging bowl to him, and the recognition of him as the Buddhist patriarch twenty-eighth in succession from Gautama. Silent though he was—he wrote no books—generations of his disciples have produced a voluminous literature on Dhyāna. Bodhidharma challenged not only worship, asceticism and monasticism, but even the study of scriptures, relying exclusively upon pure meditation on the real and universal nature of the self, or Bodhi-chitta. His teaching is very similar to Hindu Vedānta philosophy, although it embodies a Vijñāna-vāda, or idealistic interpretation of the Buddhist Sautrāntika and Mādhyamika doctrines. Nor can the resemblance of his dictum, 'where all is emptiness nothing is holy' with Tao mysticism, be missed. Bodhidharma observes:

'The only true reality is the Buddha-nature in the heart of every man. Prayer, asceticism and good works are vain. All that man need do is to turn his gaze inward and see the Buddha in his own

heart. This vision, which gives light and deliverance, comes in a moment. It is a simple, natural act like swallowing or dreaming, which cannot be taught or learnt; for it is not something imparted, but an experience of the soul, and teaching can only prepare the way for it. Some are impeded by their karma, and are physically incapable of the vision, whatever their merits or piety may be, but for those to whom it comes it is inevitable and convincing'.

One of his most distinguished disciples was Chi-k'ai, (born A.D. 531) who elaborated his master's teachings and founded a syncretic school of Buddhism called the T'ien-T'ai. Chi-kai classified the vast literature of Buddhism according to the five periods of the Buddha's active career as a minister, thus introducing a logical coherence into the diverse and apparently conflicting teachings. His classification still holds good in Chinese Buddhism. The T'ien-Tai is a magnificent synthesis, holding that all the different philosophical theories have but one end, and that it is the end that matters, not the way it is achieved. Chi-kai's teaching also spread to Japan, where it is still followed.

The Yogāchāra Vijñāna-vāda school of Buddhism, to which Hiuen Tsang belonged, owed much of its influence in China to Prabhākaramitra, who came of a royal family in Central India. After travelling a great deal in South India he went to the monastery of Nālandā, where he met Śīlabhadra. From there he went to Central Asia and succeeded in converting the Khagan of the Western Turks. He reached Ch'ang-an in 627 and gained great influence with the Chinese Emperor. He died in China in A.D. 653.

A more widespread Chinese school, second only to the Dhyāna in importance, is the Amida, or Pure Land, school of Buddhism, founded by Bodhiruchi, who taught in China from A.D. 692 to 727, when he died. Amitābha, or Amida Buddha (Amita in Japan), means literally the Buddha of Endless Light, who dwells in the Western Paradise, the Pure Land, or Sukhāvatī. Like the Dhyāna school the Amitābha sect has inspired a vast volume of literature in China and Japan. According to the doctrine the last Tathāgata, a monk called Dharmakara, becomes the Dharma Amitābha, or Infinite Light or Life. Whoever makes use of his name will at once be placed under his jurisdiction entirely and exclusively. As a ray emanating from his heart he can illuminate every being he wishes, at no matter what distance; every dying person, however great a sinner he is, who repents sincerely and wishes to be reborn in his kingdom (the Pure Land), will immediately be so reborn after his death, to be instructed there,

improved, and placed on the road to salvation. It is thus akin to the Indian Bhakti movement, and it is remarkable that neither Hiuen-Tsang nor I-tsing knew anything of this form of it. Love and adoration for the Buddha of Boundless Light appealed to the artistic and romantic temperament of the Eastern peoples, and the Western Paradise, where the devotee might enjoy blissful immortality, is the theme of many representations in glowing colours in the art of China, Japan and Tibet.

The last school to arise in China sprang from the Vajrayāna or Mantrayāna teaching of Vajrabodhi, preceptor to the king of Kāñchī, who, after living in Ceylon, went to China and preached this form of Buddhism, with its various Tāntrika mantras, from A.D. 710–732. It is grounded in the doctrine of the one primordial Buddha spirit called the Mahā-Vairochana, which embodies itself in a series of emanations and appearances. In the foundation and spread of this new school Vajrabodhi was greatly assisted by his disciple, Amoghavajra (A.D. 724–774), who taught in Lo-yang, Ho-si, and Leang-Chou. For centuries there issued forth from the famous White Horse Monastery at Lo-yang hundreds of Buddhist texts for the people in the dialect called Buddhist Mandarin. Tāntrikism spread to Japan through Kobo-Daishi, who came to Amogha for instruction; and from another Chinese disciple, Hui-kuo, the Japanese sage Kukai (A.D. 774–835) learnt the doctrines that at the close of the eighth century led to the formation of the Shingon sect in Japan. Today the Shingon is still very popular. It represents Vairochana at the centre of the Tāntrika diagram—the mighty Sun in which all things visible and invisible have their consummation and absorption.

Buddhist Art in China

Buddhism, with its emphasis on the Great Void, the empty and unsubstantial character of the external world, reshaped the practical mind of the Chinese and led ultimately to the Chinese synthesis in which stillness was held to be in constant activity and activity in constant stillness; an idea that corresponds to the Indian Mahāyāna conception of the identity of Saṃsāra and Nirvāṇa. This transformation of the racial mind left an enduring mark upon Chinese art and literature. The Greco-Buddhist art of Gandhāra first introduced the human figure into Chinese sculpture, investing it with supreme moral dignity. The cave sculpture at Yun-kang and Lung-men belonging to

the Wei period of the Six Dynasties reproduced on Chinese soil the serene Buddhas and Bodhisattvas of Ajantā, Bāgh, and Bamiyan, and made them a part of the jagged mountain faces out of which they were carved. But the T'ang period (A.D. 618–907) represents the most glorious age of Chinese sculpture. Gradually the Chinese Buddha developed a superb blending of spiritual impersonality and transcendence with human charm and elegance; while the frescoes of the dynasty, in their treatment of the ethereal Avalokiteśvaras and Amitābhas of the Chinese paradisical dreamland, show an even more effective combination of realism and the impersonal idea.

Of the three principal centres of Buddhist art in China, Tun-huang, Yun-kang, and Lung-men, Yun-kang and Lung-men seem to have been the earlier, although Tun-huang is situated on the Western boundary of China, at the junction of the caravan routes. Yun-kang is near Ta-tung in Shansi, adjoining the first capital of the Wei dynasty, and Lung-men is near Lo-yang. The excavations of the caves at Yun-k'ang is ascribed to the period between A.D. 398 and 493; while at Lung-men the grottoes were excavated after the transfer of the capital from Shansi to Lo-yang. It was also during the rule of the Wei dynasty in the fifth and sixth century that a large number of chapels were excavated and decorated at Tun-huang.

The History of Wei mentions that in the time of the Emperor Wen Ch'eng of the Northern Wei dynasty, the idea of having five colossal Buddhas carved in the Yung-kang cliff was suggested to the Emperor by an Indian monk, Tan-yao. The largest of them measured seventy feet in height and the smallest sixty. They were some of the biggest in the world, and were obviously influenced by the earlier Bamiyan statues (120 and 175 feet high), which were the earliest Buddha colossi to be constructed in the third or fourth century A.D.—the centuries that witnessed the remarkable march of Mahāyāna Buddhism. At Tun-huang the colossal Buddha in the Caves of the Thousand Buddhas is over ninety feet high. Here, in A.D. 366, an Indian monk, Lo Ts'un, according to an inscription of the T'ang dynasty, built the first chapel—the Cave of Unequalled Height—and he too may have derived his inspiration from Bamiyan. In these huge images we see a blending of the Indian religious concept of the Buddha as the Chakravartī of the Universe and the Hellenistic political concept of the deified Emperor as Kosmokrator. Hiuen-Tsang mentions a wooden statue of Maitreya, 100 feet high, at Dardu, north of the Punjāb. The sitting stone figure in the fifth cave

in the precincts of the Shih-fo-szu in Yun-kang is possibly the most magnificent of all images in China. The rock caves at Lung-men are smaller in scale than those of Yun-kang. The four walls and the ceilings of these huge caves are covered all over with niches and carvings of a thousand Buddhas, flying Apsarās, Hindu divinities and guardians, and graceful floral designs. In most of the Lung-men caves we find the dates, the names of the sculptors and donors, and the accounts of the excavation. The earliest of the inscriptions dates from the seventh year of Tai-ho of the Emperor Hsiao-yen of the Northern Wei dynasty (A.D. 483). The rest of the caves were the work of the Northern Wei down to the Sui and T'ang periods.

The evolution of the cave art and architecture of Tun-huang, Yun-kang, and Lung-men shows first the enrichment of the traditional style of China proper by the Gandhāra style, which came in the wake of Buddhism, until the latter was completely absorbed by the Northern Wei style; second, the impact of the Gupta style, which was yet feeble in the Northern Wei works, stronger in the Sui Dynasty, and quite marked in the T'ang. As Miss I. V. Vincent observes in *The Sacred Oasis*: 'A chain of these Buddhist rock-cut chapels seems to have extended from India through Central Asia at least as far as the mountains south of Kanchow in Kansu, and besides these, cave-temples are found in many other parts of China'. The Indian monks, Lo-ts'un and Tan-yao, associated with the construction and decoration of the caves at Tun-huang and Yun-kang, must have possessed a masterly knowledge of architecture and sculpture. The names of some of the Indian painters of the period have also come down to us, Sakyabuddha, Buddhakīrti, and Kumārabodhi. From Ajantā, across the highways of Kāśmīra, Gandhāra and Kucha, from Nepal and Tibet, or from Amarāvatī and Siṃhala by the sea-route, the art of Gupta India travelled to China and transplanted itself in her soil.

Buddhism, the Hope of World Peace

In its Tibetan Tāntrika phase Buddhism was harnessed by the Mongol Empire, then the largest in the world, and an effective bridge between the Far East and the Far West. 'Pax Tartarika', the achievement of which had cost the destruction of twenty realms and millions of human beings, held the promise, strangely enough, of a Buddhist

world brotherhood. At the end of the thirteenth century, however, on the death of Kublai Khan (1214-1294), the Mongol Empire was disrupted, and with it the economic, religious, diplomatic and scientific links it had established between Asia and Europe. Thus the last hope of securing world peace through Buddhism faded away, just at the very time when world commerce, in the true sense of the word, had begun to develop freely; with China, the Indian Archipelago, India, Egypt and the Mediterranean all coming within the ambit of a common economic system.

After the thirteenth century Buddhism ceased to be an active spiritual force on the Asian mainland. This was due to political rather than cultural factors. During the century-and-a-half reign of the Southern Sung dynasty (1127–1279) in Hankow, to which the Chinese capital was removed because of the ascendancy of the Tartars, no Indian monk visited China, although Chinese writers on Buddhism increased in number. In North China, under the patronage of the Yuen or Mongol dynasty (A.D. 1280–1368), Lamaist Buddhism throve. Sha-lo-pa's Chinese compilation of Buddhist sūtras and Śāstras was one of the last to be done by an Indian monk in China. In South China the Sungs encouraged translations from Sanskrit texts by Chinese scholars (1314). Sung landscape painting, with its sense of the silence and mystery of the universe and the transience and unreality of man's life, is saturated with Buddhist thought; while through Sung poetry runs the Buddhist note of melancholy, its awareness of the ephemeral character of all natural life.

Though the flow of Indian monk-scholars to China by the land-route was completely broken, Buddhism was still an influence in Greater China. The conversion of Mongolia to Buddhism and the widespread adoption of celibacy led to the transformation of fierce, roving races into sedentary and docile agriculturists, camel-drivers and shepherds, and was of considerable economic and political benefit to China. The Chinese statesman Wan-chun-hu wrote to the Chinese government in 1570: 'Buddhism forbids bloodshed, prescribes confession, and reconfession, and recommends a virtuous life; for this reason we should do our utmost to diffuse the faith among the nomads'. The Ming dynasty (1368–1644) deliberately used Buddhism to convert the virile and explosive nomads of Turkestan and Mongolia into pacific neighbours. It was Chinese Buddhism, not Indian, that had been reaching the nomadic fringe of Chinese civilization; for strife among the tribes of Central Asia after

the death of Kublai Khan completely blocked the east-west caravan route, and disrupted the ancient overland contact with India. In Further India and the Indian Archipelago the unifying mission of Buddhism in Asia was yet to continue actively for another two centuries before it succumbed to the onslaught of Islam.

CHAPTER XII

COLONIAL CULTURE AND ART

INDIA OF THE ISLANDS

The Early Beginnings of Southern Colonisation

THE Gupta age gave a great fillip to India's colonial enterprise beyond the seas in South-east Asia. This was largely the outcome of the control the Imperial Guptas exercised over the eastern port of Tāmralipti and the Arabian sea-ports of Broach, Vaijayantī and Kalyāṇī, and of the lure of commerce with Indonesia to secure the luxuries demanded by a more sophisticated civilization. The spread of Indian culture to the south had actually begun as early as the fifth century B.C., with the legendary conquest of Ceylon by Prince Vijaya Siṃha, who named the island Siṃhala after himself; an episode that is represented in one of the frescoes at Ajantā. Later, in the third century B.C., the courageous monk-missionaries sent out by Aśoka visited Ceylon, which was converted to Buddhism by Mahendra and Saṅghamitrā, and also Suvarṇabhūmi (Sona and Uttara), which was probably Indonesia. But it was the Śātavāhana Empire (218–73 B.C.), with its strategic position in middle India, from sea to sea, and its important ports of Vaijayantī (Goa) and Kalyāṇī on the Arabian Sea, and Dhanakaṭaka, Masulipatam, and Konāraka on the Bay of Bengal, that first developed a brisk traffic with the eastern islands. This is abundantly indicated in the stories of the adventurous sea voyages of Guṇāḍhya, who lived in Pratiṣṭhāna (the Paithana of Ptolemy). The heroes of the sea were called Samudraśūras, and such islands in the eastern waters as Kaṭāha, Karpūra, Suvarṇa, and Siṁhala are mentioned. The Buddhist text Niddesa, composed not later than the second century A.D., refers to a veritable gold hunt in Suvarṇabhūmi, reached after crossing the sea, where hazardous journeys across the 'creeper' path, the 'bamboo' path and the 'goat' path are undertaken, until a river with banks of golden sand is

reached. We also come across the merchant princes of Vaijayantī and Kalyāṇī, who dedicated the riches they obtained from commerce to the decoration of the caves at Kārli and Kaṇheri. Gradually commerce led to colonisation.

The history of India's expansion in the South-eastern waters covers no less than two millennia, from the fifth century B.C. to at least the end of the fourteenth century A.D. The Nagara Kṛitagrama, a Javanese text of 1365, quoted by R. C. Majumdar, mentions that migrants came to the Javanese capital of Majapahit (founded by King Kṛitarajasa in 1292) from such regions of India as Karṇāṭaka and Gauḍa 'unceasingly in large numbers. They came in ships with merchandise. Monks and distinguished Brāhmaṇas also came from these lands and were entertained'. As late as about the end of the fourteenth century, Rajasangara (1350–1389), the principal ruler of the Majapahit Empire, constructed the bas reliefs in the beautiful temple of Panataran, illustrating scenes from the Rāmāyaṇa and the Kṛiṣṇāyana. In its hey-day, the Majapahit Empire (1294–1478) embraced Śrī Vijaya and all the islands of the Indian archipelago, as well as the Malay Peninsula.

The Geographical Connotation of Dvīpāntara

Traditionally the entire region, full of Indian colonies and kingdoms, was called Dvīpāntara Bhārata. Dvīpa, according to Pāṇini, means land surrounded by water on two sides, and hence includes a peninsula like Malaya. In the Vāmana Purāṇa, the names of the nine divisions (nava-bheda) or territories across the seas (samudrāntarita) included in Bhārata-varṣa and designated Dvīpāntara, or Island India, are given as follows: Indra-dvīpa (Burma), Kaserumat, Tāmraparṇa (Tāmraparṇī), Gabhastimat, Nāgadvīpa (Nicobar), Kaṭāha (Kedah), Siṃhala (Ceylon), Varuṇa or Varhiṇa (Borneo), and Kumāra. It has not been possible for historians to identify all the islands. Similarly the Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa includes in ancient Jambū-dvīpa many dvīpas (i.e., islands or peninsulas) that are geographically linked with Bhārata. It observes: 'All these peninsulas are known as Varhiṇadvīpa Śaila (which may be identified with Varuṇa or Borneo). There are hundreds of such islands and peninsulas in India. They are known as Aṅgadvīpa (which may be identified with Kambuja and Champā), Yavadvīpa (Java), Malayadvīpa (the Malay peninsula), Kuśadvīpa, Śaṅkhadvīpa (Śaṅkhay island),

and Varāhadvīpa (Barawa island). Within Jambūdvīpa there are six islands abounding in rich mines and in various kinds of birds and animals'.

Another early mention of Dvīpāntara is to be found in the Kathā-sarit Sāgara, in stories 25 and 26. Śaktideva is anxious to go to a city named Kanakapurī and interrogates an ascetic, Dīrghatapas, who replies: 'Though I am so old, my son, I have never heard of Kanaka-purī till today. I have made acquaintance with various travellers from foreign lands, and I have never heard any one speak of it, much less have I seen it. But I am sure it must be in Dvīpāntara'. Kanaka-purī may be Suvarṇabhūmi (or Pegu) or Suvarṇadvīpa (the Malay Peninsula). The other story records an itinerary mentioning such regions as Jalapura, Nārikeladvīpa, Kaṭāhadvīpa, Karpūradvīpa, Suvarṇadvīpa and Siṃhala. Suvarṇadvīpa can be reached, according to the same text, by land and sea, and can therefore be identified with the Malay Peninsula, and not with the island of Sumatra, although the latter is equally rich in gold.

The sarva-dvīpāḥ mentioned along with Siṃhala in the famous Allahabad Pillar praśasti of Samudragupta obviously refers to Dvīpāntara in general; the Hindu colonies of the Southern Ocean and Farther India, which offered the Gupta Emperor various gifts, applied to him for charters recognising their sovereignty, and finally gave him their loyalty. H. Raychaudhurī suggests that the epithet 'Dhanada-Varuṇendrāntaka-sama' used in the inscription indicates that the Imperial Guptas exercised some control over the islands in the neighbouring seas.

In Kālidāsa's Raghuvaṃśa (vi. 57) there is a specific reference to Dvīpāntara in connection with the clove flower, which is native to the eastern islands. 'The breeze, scented with lavaṅga blossom and wafted from Dvīpāntara, removes the drops of perspiration from the amorous King of Kaliṅga', the kingdom which played a dominant role in the early colonisation of Dvīpāntara. Pūrva Kaliṅga is the name for Java, or a port of Java, according to Chinese history, and thus the poet's mention of Dvīpāntara in connection with the King of Kaliṅga is extremely apposite. Similarly appropriate is his reference to the King of Anūpadeśa, or the land of the Narmadā (the Narbada Valley, with its capital at Māhiṣmatī), who installed sacrificial pillars (yūpas) in the "eighteen" islands. In the fourth century A.D. Yūpas were actually set up in Borneo by King Mūlavarman, grandson of the mythical Hindu coloniser Kauṇḍinya. It is possible that Borneo was colonised from the Arabian sea coast of India.

I-tsing, on his way to India from China in A.D. 673, spent six months in Sumatra in order to study Sanskrit grammar; and he mentions more than ten colonies in his region where Indian customs and religious practices, along with Sanskrit leaning, were prevalent, including Śrī Bhoga (Śrī Vijaya) in Sumatra, Kaliṅga (Pūrva Kaliṅga) in Java, Mahasin and Pembua in Borneo, and the islands of Kunlun, Bali and Bhojapara. He also mentions that all the islands of the South Sea were generally known to the Chinese as K'un-lun, 'since the people of Ku-lun (or K'un-lun) first visited Kochin and Kwangtang', and that the language of K'un-lun was prevalent in Śrī Vijaya. The Indian colonists and settlers who came to these islands were also given the same name by the Chinese. P. C. Bagchi, in editing a Sanskrit-Chinese dictionary of the eighth century A.D., gives the Sanskrit-equivalent for K'un-lun as Ji-pātta-la; and Jipattala, or Dipattala is the same word as Dvīpāntara according to Sylvain Levi. Bagchi suggests that K'un-lun, or Polo Cendore (the small group of islands with which it is identified by Takakasu in his edition of I-tsing), stands for Sanskrit Chandra-dvīpa, through a Prākrit or Malay intermediate form like Chandar. It is noteworthy, first, that kings, subordinate chiefs, nobles and officials in Malaya and ancient Cambodia often bore the title K'un-lun or Chandra; and second, that the name of K'un-lun was used for a number of islands and regions in Indonesia and Further India—both obvious evidences of Indian colonisation. Corresponding to the term Dvīpāntara in Sanskrit and K'un-lun in Chinese is the Javanese Bhumyantara or Nusantara, i.e., intervening between (antara) India and China. As in Middle Asia, the Hindu colonies and kingdoms of the south-east all had Sanskrit names.

The Gold-rush

Even at the time of the Śātavāhanas it was not the Deccan alone that participated in colonial trade and commerce. For like the Bṛihatkathā, the Jātakas and the Milindapañho also indicate that in the two centuries immediately preceding and following the birth of Christ, overseas trade and exploration captured the imagination of the Indian people. Many stories and legends from different parts of India describe the romantic adventures of traders, merchants and 'gold-seekers' in far-off lands across the seas, together with the fabulous riches brought from distant shores. All this amply demon-

strates that the lure of gold stimulated the colonisation of Dvīpāntara Bhārata. In the third century A.D. the voyage from India to Fu-nan (Cambodia) and back took three or four years according to a Chinese source. But it took Fa-Hien (A.D. 399–414) only a fortnight to sail from Tāmralipti to Siṃhala in fine weather in winter, and about three months from Siṃhala to Java in tempestuous weather, breaking his journey at an island to repair a leak. In the seventh century it took I-tsing only two months to travel from Śrī Vijaya to Nāgapatam. As voyages in the eastern waters became less hazardous and of shorter duration, Indian merchants flocked to the markets of Malaya and the Indian Archipelago in large numbers.

'Gold is abundant in Śrī Vijaya', notes I-tsing, who also mentions the following important agricultural products: betel-nuts (pin-long, Sanskrit, pūṅgī), nutmegs, cloves (lavaṅga), and Baros camphor. The wealth, luxury and flourishing condition of the arts, crafts and trade of the Gupta Empire, to which Fa-Hien bears ample testimony, promoted both western and eastern commerce. In fact the extension of the Gupta Empire to Gujarat and the eastern sea-board from Kaliṅga to Kāñchī, with their famous sea-ports and markets, gave a great fillip to the lucrative Indo-Chinese trade in gold, silver, spices and areca-nuts, as well as to colonisation and settlement in Dvīpāntara Bhārata.

Political Causes of Colonisation

To these economic causes must be added a political factor: the political unrest and confusion in Western India and Gujarat due to the discomfiture of the Śakas, the Muruṇḍas, the Gurjaras and the White Hūṇas as the result of the conquests of the Gupta emperors and Yaśodharman, the advance of the Sassanians and Turks from the north, and the later conquests of Prabhākaravardhana and Harṣa. Thus from the fourth to the middle of the eighth century swarms of foreign and Indian refugees must have sought the ports of Gujarat and Western India in order to emigrate.

The Javanese chronicles have preserved the tradition that Java was first colonised by a Prince from Gujarat as early as A.D. 75. Similarly, Cambodian tradition and Chinese history indicate that the Hindu kingdom of Kambuja or Fu-nan (comprising Cambodia, Cochin China and Annam) was founded in the first or second century A.D. as the result of the migration of the Scythian Brāhmaṇa Kauṇḍinya or the Kṣatriya Ādityavaṁśa, King of Indraprastha,

who married the daughter of the local Nāga king, Somā, and established the royal Somavaṃśa in the land. P. C. Bagchī suggests that Fu-nan is the Chinese equivalent of Brahma (deśa), by which name the entire Indian colony had previously been known. Only Burma, i.e., Brahma-deśa, retains this name. Louis Malleret's recent explorations at Oc-eo, the capital of the Funan empire (first century to the beginning of the sixth), indicate that Indian influences came by sea rather than by the land route. The finds date from the Han period in China. Heine Geldern remarks: 'Evidence is slowly accumulating which indicates that commercial and missionary relations between India and South-east Asia may have started earlier than was usually accepted. Malleret's discoveries at Oc-eo have shown how firmly Indian culture was established in Southern Indo-China in the second century A.D.'.

It was in the first century after Christ that both the Śakas and Parthians, or Pahlavas, first made their far-reaching incursions into the Indus valley and Western India, carving out kingdoms from the ruins of the Sātavāhana Empire. Political and social unrest, which began in the Indus delta, Kāṭhiāwāṛ and Western India and lasted for a whole millennium after Christ, stimulated enterprise and colonisation in the far East, which waxed and waned in accordance with political and economic conditions. In South India the recurrent conflicts between the Pallavas, the Pāṇḍyas, the Cholas and the Cheras, all maritime powers, as well as the pressure from the Imperial Vākāṭakas and their successors in the north, promoted the first Pallava settlements in Malaya, Cambodia, Sumatra and Java between the first century B.C. and the second century A.D.

The Major Waves of Indian Colonisation

The history of the mainland dynasties was thus of considerable significance in the development of South-east Asian commerce and colonisation, since this was based on maritime control of the Bay of Bengal, which shifted from one power to another and finally from the mainland to Sumatra, where the great maritime Śrī Vijaya Empire of the Śailendras was founded in the eighth century A.D. H. G. Quaritch Wales has distinguished four successive major waves of Indian expansion in the Indo-Chinese peninsula, corresponding to the four characteristic periods in the development of Indian art: Amarāvatī (second and third centuries), Gupta (fifth to seventh

centuries), Pallava (530–750), and Pāla (750–900). The impact of the South Indian Pallava school of architecture and sculpture is quite traceable in Ceylon, Burma, Lower Siam, and Sumatra from the second to the fifth century A.D.; while the North Indian Gupta influences penetrated into Malaya, Siam, ancient Funan, Java, and Borneo in the later centuries. The art of the Pāla Empire influenced Mahāyāna figure sculpture in Malaya and Java after the close of the eighth century, the Tai sculpture of Northern Siam in the ninth century, sculpture and fresco painting at Pagan in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, and finally the sculpture and decoration of the Bayon at Angkor Thom in the twelfth century. In Burma, Central Siam, the Malay peninsula and Sumatra the Gupta, Pallava and Pāla influences helped to bring about a high level of culture, the Pāla influences, however, being less marked in Burma and Siam. Throughout the Western zone Buddhism and Vaiṣṇavism established themselves and flourished to a greater extent than in Champā and Cambodia, where the Tāntrika Śakti-Śivaist cult of the Liṅgaṃ found congenial soil for its development. Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna Buddhism, as well as Śivaism, coming from Bengal and Orissa, flourished in Sumatra and Java and received great support under the Imperial Śailendras. The influence of India in the Indo-Chinese peninsula reached its greatest intensity in their regime.

The Buddhist Śailendra Empire gradually extended its supremacy from Sumatra over the whole of Malayasia, Java, Kambuja and Champā, and became the most powerful in the eighth century A.D. It won respect and recognition from the rulers of India and China, as several Arab merchants have recorded. One of them, Ibn Rosteh (A.D. 903), observed: 'He (the Śailendra king) is not regarded as the greatest among the kings of India, because he dwells in the islands. No other king is richer or more powerful than he and none has more revenue'. The Śailendra Empire carried on a hundred years' war for the mastery of the Bay of Bengal with the Chola Empire, which included for some time Malaya, the Nicobar Islands and Ceylon, and ultimately emerged victorious, retaining its maritime supremacy in the eastern waters for quite seven centuries.

The Principal Ports and Routes of the Eastern Expansion

The famous Indian ports from which the eastward voyages were undertaken were: Tāmralipti on the Bay (mentioned in the Jātakas

and the Kathā-sarit Sāgara); Dantapura (Danton) the capital of Kaliṅga, Koṇāraka or Koṇārkanagara (Ptolemy's Kannagara), and Cheli-tala (Eranḍapalla, mentioned by Hiuen-Tsang) in Orissa; Paloura (Palur) in the Ganjam district; Guduru (Koddura) at the mouth of the Godāvarī; Kaṇṭakasola (Contacossyla, Ghanṭasāla); Dharaṇīkoṭa (Dhenukaṭaka); Masulipatam (Ptolemy's Maisolia) at the mouth of the Kistna; Amarāvatī; Kāñchīpuram; Māmallapuram; and Puhar, or Kāverīpaddinam, at the mouth of the Kāverī. The more important sea-routes to the east were: from Paloura (ancient Dantapura) to the lower delta of Burma; from Amarāvatī, Masulipatam (Dhānakaṭaka), Kāñchīpuram, and Kāverīpaddinam to the Malay Peninsula, and southwards through the Straits of Malacca to Palembang and Śrī Vijaya, or to Borneo; and from Tāmralipti and Broach to Dvīpāntara. We read in the Kathā-sarit Sāgara that a merchant, Chandrasvāmin, in the course of his eastern voyage visited the following islands in succession: Nārikela-dvīpa (Nicobar), Kaṭāha-dvīpa (Keddah), Karpūra-dvīpa or Varusaka (Barus, north of Sumatra), and Suvarṇa-dvīpa (Sumatra), and finally went to Siṃhala-dvīpa (Ceylon). This indicates the usual route in Pūrva Sāgara taken by merchants from Tāmralipti and, in the early centuries of the Christian era, from Siṃhapura (modern Singur) and Dantapura (modern Dantan).

The Eastern ports at which the Indian merchants landed varied from time to time and included: Śrīkṣetra (Prome); Sudhammāvatī (Thaton) at the head of the Gulf of Martaban; Takuapa (ancient Takola, mentioned by Ptolemy); Gaṅgānagara (the capital of Central Malaya); Kaṭāha Kadaram, or Keddah, in the Malay peninsula referred to as Kotat or Kortaha by Ptolemy, and as Kalagam in the Tamil Sangam literature, and frequently mentioned in the Kathā Sarit Sāgara, and also by I-tsing; Kamalāṅga (Hiuen-Tsang's Kia-mo-lang-kia, modern Ligor); Śrī Vijaya, or Foche, or Palembang, in Sumatra; Pūrva Kaliṅga in Java; Tonking in Cambodia; and Kwung-fu in China.

The stages in the voyage from China to India, as mentioned by I-tsing in the seventh century, were as follows: (1) Śrī Bhoja (which may be identified with Śrī Vijaya), twenty days' sail from China; (2) the country of the naked people (the Nicobar Islands), ten days sail from Ka-cha, which may be identified with Kaṭāha Kadaram, whence Nāgapatam (Negapatam) is reached after one month; (3) Tāmralipti, on the mouth of the Ganges, a month's sail from the Nicobar Islands (Nakavaram). Of the return journey from India the Chinese pilgrim

gives the following details: (1) from Tāmralipti to Ka-cha, a voyage of two months; (2) from Ka-cha to Śrī Bhoja or Śrī Vijaya, another month's voyage; and (3) from Bhoja to Kwang-fu in China, about a month's voyage. The Emperor Harṣa, when he asked Hiuen-Tsang by which route he would prefer to return to China, added, 'If you select the southern sea-route I will send official attendants to accompany you'. The ancient ports of Tāmralipti, Śrī Vijaya and Canton were for several centuries great commercial emporiums and centres of learning, thronged with Indian and Chinese traders, scholars and pilgrims, that helped to bring about an intellectual and spiritual intimacy between two great civilizations, the Indian and the Chinese.

The Second India of the Pacific

A second India, Dvīpāntara Bhārata, embracing the kingdoms of Funan (ancient Annam), Haripūñjaya or Lamp'un (Northern Siam), Dvārāvatī (Central Siam), Kaliṅga (Chinese Ho-ling, Eastern Java), Śrī Vijaya (South-eastern Sumatra), P'an-P'an (on the Bay of Bandon), Laṅkasuka (Kedah and Perak), and Tambraliṅga (Eastern Malaya), which had developed reputable centres of Hindu and Buddhist learning and culture, grew up between India and China in the eastern seas, both geographically and culturally; India came, as it were, to meet China half way. No Chinese monk needed to proceed as far as Ceylon, Tāmralipti, Nālandā or Valabhī to read the Buddhist scriptures, since these were read and taught admirably in the monasteries of Ramañña, Haripuñjaya, Dvārāvatī, Funan, Śrī Vijaya, Kaliṅga and Ligor (Nagara Śrī Dharmarāja). I-tsing remained as many as five years at Śrī Vijaya (Chinese Shihlifoshih, or, shortly, Fo che) translating in its Buddhist atmosphere the Sanskrit manuscripts he had brought from India. Here 'there are more than a thousand Buddhist monks, whose minds are set on study and good works. They examine and discuss all possible subjects, exactly as in India itself: the rules and rites are identical'. No Chinese layman or pilgrim needed even to go to the holy land of Buddhism on the Ganges; for sacred Buddhist sites had been replanted in Red Valley, and the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas at the temples and stūpas of Champā, Kambuja-deśa and Borobodur were as inspiring as those of Sārnāth, Mathurā and Ajantā. The monasteries of Java, Sumatra and Dvārāvatī played the same role in the spread of Buddhism as those

of the Middle Asian oasis-cities of Kucha, Khotan and Kashgar in the previous centuries. It took many centuries, however, of heroism on the part of Indian princes, adventurousness on the part of Indian traders, and religious devotion on the part of Indian monk-pilgrims for the second India to develop, from Burma, Malaya and Ceylon to Sumatra and Java, and from Sumatra and Java to Champā and Kambuja.

A constant migratory stream of Kṣatriya nobles, Brāhmaṇa priests, Buddhist monks and nuns, and Vaiśya merchants founded and maintained the pioneer colonies and settlements out of which grew the great kingdoms of Śrīkṣetra, Funan, Champā, P'an-P'an, Śrī Vijaya and Majapahit. Of the early Hindu rulers whose names have come down from local traditions or Chinese chronicles we may mention Langkesu (second century A.D.), his son Bhagdato (Bhāgadatta), and Śrīpālavarma of Pahang (fifth century A.D.) in the Malay Peninsula; Devavarman (second century A.D.) in Western Java; Kauṇḍinya (first century A.D.) in Kambuja, or modern Cambodia; and Śrī Māra (second century A.D.) in Champā or modern Annam.

According to Hiuen-Tsang, the Pyu kingdom of Śrīkṣetra was the first great Hindu kingdom beyond the frontiers of Kāmarūpa (Assam). Its ruins cover an area of 400 square miles near old Prome (Hmazwa). Besides a vast quantity of votive tablets bearing figures of the Buddha and scenes of his life, a large number of inscriptions, written in Sanskrit, Pali, mixed Pali and Sanskrit, and in a language attributed to the Pyu (a Tibeto-Burman tribe), have been unearthed. They belong to a period between the fifth and seventh centuries A.D. An important find is a stone stela from Hmazwa depicting the Buddha with his two disciples. It has an inscription in Pyu and Sanskrit, but its date is uncertain; for Burmese archaeology is in its infancy. It is probable that both Buddhism and Brāhmanism reached Burma long before the fifth century A.D., possibly in the third century B.C. Certain groups of figures, of devotees, on the stone stelas unearthed in Burma show a strange affinity with those in the Sāñchī and Bharhut reliefs. A large number of Brāhmanic images have been discovered not only in Hmazwa but also at Mergui and Arakan, indicating that Brāhmanism existed side by side with Hīnayāna Buddhism in the early centuries of the Christian era. An inscription of King Jayachandravarman attributed to the seventh century A.D. states that an image of the Buddha was set up by him at the instance of his guru to maintain good relations between himself and his brother, Harivikrama. It is further recorded that the king built two

cities side by side. A part of ancient Śrī-kṣetra was called Peikthanomyo, or the city of Viṣṇu.

Another ancient Hindu kingdom was Ramaññadeśa (Lower Burma). From the Chamadevivaṃśa, or Annals of Chama Devi, we learn that its king married Cham T'ewi, the daughter of the king of Lavō, or Lopburi. The queen left the royal court in A.D. 663 to lead a religious missionary expedition to Haripūñjaya, or Lampun (Central Siam), where she founded five Buddhist monasteries. Her two sons became kings of two Hindu states of Siam, viz., Haripūñjaya and Lampang (Kelang). Chama Devi of Lavō founded another ancient city in Siam, called Alambanganapuri (Lampāng Lūang). Lavo, or Lopburi, eighty miles north of Bangkok, is more ancient. According to Reginald Lé May, the earliest Buddhist images of pre-Khmer style found in Lopburi and elsewhere in Central Siam show the Gupta style, and belong at the latest to the sixth and seventh centuries.

Hiuen-Tsang and I-tsing mention a kingdom in Further India between Śrīkṣetra and Īśānapura, or Khmer-land: T'o-lo-po-ti, which is Dvārāvatī, the colonial counterpart of the famous city of Kṛiṣṇā in Kathiawar. Most of the Buddhist statuary here is usually attributed to the period from the fifth to the tenth centuries A.D., and shows the dominance of Gupta forms, which possibly migrated from here to Funan, or ancient Cambodia.

Everywhere, as is to be expected, Brāhmanical culture preceded Buddhism, indicating how early eastern colonisation began. But Brāhmanism shed its tendency towards social barriers and separatism, characteristic of the Indian environment in the new milieu. The congeries of peoples in the entire region from the Malay Peninsula to Borneo and from Sumatra to Annam, assimilated Indian culture, adopting the language, literature and social customs of India, and the deities and modes of worship of the Purāṇas. The process of absorbing the backward peoples was on the whole peaceful, as it was in Middle Asia. A Greater India thus established itself in the Indian Ocean, without design or conquest, but by a gradual fusion of races and peoples, and by the social and cultural elevation of the natives through the dissemination of Indian ideas and forms of governments.

The far-famed ancient regions of India, such as Kamboja, Gandhāra, Kaliṅga, Daśārṇa, Mālava, Śrīkṣetra and Ayodhyā, transplanted themselves across the seas. In the new geographical context Indianism started a fresh cycle of development. The ancient celebrated cities of India, such as Kauśāmbī, Mathurā, Champā, Dvārāvatī and Amarāvatī, the holy mountains, such as the Mahendra

Parvata, and the sacred rivers, such as the Chandrabhāgā and Gomatī, reappeared and revived age-old memories and traditions in the colonies and settlements of the East. In the upper valleys of the Mekong and the Red River, where India meets China in the Pacific, the sacred sites of Buddhism were replanted, as in the north-western borderlands of Kāpiśa and Gandhāra: the Bodhi Tree, the Gṛiddhrakūṭa, the Pippala Cave, and even the mansion of Upagupta. Thus the third holy land of Buddhism was established, almost touching the territory of China, for the pilgrimage of the faithful.

The Triumphs of Indian Art in South-east Asia

The broad humanism and compassion of Indian art and religion found its fullest expression not within the frontiers of India but amidst the tropical ease, luxuriance and prolificness of Dvīpāntara Bhārata. In the great stūpa at Borobodur in Central Java (*c.* 775–825), built by the Śailendra Emperors, we have, in the words of Coomaraswamy 'a third great illustrated Bible, similar in range but more extensive than the reliefs at Sāñchī and the paintings of Ajantā'. Here, indeed, we discern the culmination of the Gupta plastic ideal. About 2,000 bas-reliefs illustrate the life of the Buddha according to the Lalitavistara, the Divyāvadāna, the Karmavibhaṅga, the Gaṇḍavyūha and the Jātakamālā, as well as various other legends. Borobodur rivals Gupta classical sculpture in its poise and clarity, elegance and spirit of adoration, but far excels it in the stupendousness and magnificence of its conception and execution. With its numerous galleries filled with familiar illustrations of the lives of the Bodhisattva and rising from the lotus pedestal, step by step, gallery by gallery, to the topmost tier, where the seventy-two Buddhas of past and future eons are concealed under lattice-work domes, being celestials of the world of arūpa, this stūpa, in its architectural pattern, gives superb expression to the Mahāyāna view of life, in which all material things and human events dissolve into ineffable consciousness (vijñāna). The plan of Borobodur represents the final application and refinement of the Indian stūpa and prāsāda forms of temple-building. It symbolises the Mahāyānic diagram of the cosmos and its order—the form-body of the Law or Logos (Vairochana) made visible. Almost a millennium earlier the architecture of Sāñchī stūpa first embodied the Buddhist conception of the cosmic diagram, which the Mahāyāna perfected far beyond the borders of the motherland.

In some measure the Borobodur design, with its successive levels for parikramā, is derived from the stūpa of Pahārpur in Bengal, indicating the intimacy between Bengal and the Śailendra Empire of Java, which is also suggested by the Nālandā inscription of Balaputra, ruler of Sumatra and Java, of A.D. 860. The poise, fullness, and mellifluous beauty of the forms of Borobodur are reminiscent of the golden age of Pāla sculpture. Its panels of reliefs, placed end to end, would cover three miles. It has no less than 432 niches containing various types of Buddha figure, and its circumambulatory corridor is the longest in the world. Its sculptural style changes with the ascending galleries from the realistic and decorative to the abstract and esoteric, in harmony with the ascending Buddha-fields, or kṣetras, leading up to the Buddha Vairochana, or the Great illuminator, in the centre of the cosmos. In size, artistic excellence and majestic overall design this stūpa far surpasses the temples of the Indian mainland, and is regarded indeed as one of the wonders of the world. It may be recalled that the period of its construction in Java was synchronous with Muslim aggression and the subjugation of Sind and the Western Punjab (711-713) in India.

Another veritable art gallery is the Thousand Temples of Prambanan (eight to ninth century A.D.). The art of Prambanan rivals, if it is not superior to, the art of Borobodur, and records the noble stories of endurance, devotion and sacrifice of the Rāmāyaṇa, the Mahābhārata and the Kriṣṇāyana. Here, after Sāñchī, Ajantā and Borobodur, we have the fourth magnificent illustrated Bible of Indian legends. Some archaeologists think that the majestic Śiva temple at Prambanan, which is about 180 feet high and stands in a group of eight main shrines surrounded by upwards of 200 smaller ones, must originally have been more imposing than the great Borobodur. The principal triad of temples in the centre is dedicated to the Trimūrti; the smaller shrines encircle the main temples in four massive rows, and the whole group produces a most majestic and imposing effect—a fitting counterpoise to Borobodur. In its melting tenderness and elegance, its dynamic rhythm, restlessness and poignancy Prambanan carries the plastic techniques and traditions of the Gupta and Pallava schools to perfection.

One of the marvels of the world's art is Angkor Thom (Nagaradhāma, or ancient Yaśodharapura), with the grand temple of Bayon in the centre, built by kings Yaśovarman I (A.D. 889-910), Sūryavarman II (about A.D. 1125), and Yajñavarman VII (A.D. 1181–1201). P. Briggs has aptly pointed out that 'the topographical position,

physical lay-out and sculptural decoration of the Khmer capital of Angkor Thom, was a microcosmic replica of an idealised macrocosmic edifice'. The city was built as the temple of God, Śivaloka; in the central tower dominating the pyramidal temple is the massive Chaturānana, or four-faced Śiva, wrapped in meditation—now smiling dreamily and dispassionately over the vast and dense jungle that has buried a magnificent civilization. This is a colossal yet sublime replica of the familiar Indian Chaturānana liṅga of Gupta and post-Gupta India, tenderly and serenely overlooking the rhythms of life and death, of both Saṃsāra and Śivaloka. On the temple walls, depicted with wonderful rhythm and vitality, reminiscent of the exquisite Gupta art of the mainland, are a thousand tales from the epics, the Bhāgavata, the Harivaṃśa and other Hindu legends, with Garuḍas and Apsarās standing in tranquil meditation. The bas-reliefs cover a total length of half a mile. With Śiva, Viṣṇu and Hari-Hara are the images of the Bodhisattva, Avalokiteśvara; while the Nāga or serpent, the Khmer architectural motif, is Hinduised into the eternal āsana, or seat of Viṣṇu, with neither beginning nor end, forming the rail and guarding the temple entrance with its upreared sevenfold hood. In their blend of vitality and classic poise the reliefs and sculptures of Angkor surpass those of Borobodur, while the Bayon is a lyrical poem in stone, elusive and ethereal, perhaps the most imaginative creation in the world's architecture. It may be recalled that the century which saw the completion of the temple city in Cambodia also saw the seizure and despoliation of the imperial city of Kanauja, or Mahodaya, by Mahmud of Ghazni (1025). With the advent of the Muslims India and Greater India were destined soon to move away from each other.

Yet another wonder among the creations of Indian art is represented by the Fifty Thousand Pagodas of Pagan (Arimadanapura), the capital of the Burmese rulers. What is sometimes regarded as the most magnificent temple city of the world (A.D. 847–1298) is now a mere village on the banks of the Irrawaddy, 92 miles south-west of Mandalay. The Nat Hlaung Gyaung contains reliefs depicting the avatāras of Viṣṇu which reveal the embellishment and refinement of the Gupta style. Elegant representations of the Buddha in relief and Jātaka scenes on glazed terracotta panels are also characteristic of the art of Pagan. The reliefs as well as the fresco paintings show marked Pāla filiations, while the ground plan resembles that of the great temple of Pahārpur in Bengal of the Pāla period. It is noteworthy that King Kynzitha, the most celebrated monarch of Burma,

who employed Indian architects to build the famous Ānanda temple (A.D. 1085–1107) at Pagan, sent a special mission to Bodh-Gaya to restore its well-known ancient shrine, which is built after the Gayā Mahābodhi model.

Borobodur, Angkor Thom and Pagan are strikingly different from one another in their architecture, but their beauty and splendour can be explained only by the influence of Indian art and religion. If we may be permitted to use an expression applied by Coedes to Khmer art, the Indianised art and architecture of South-East Asia represent a vigorous trunk springing from an Indian seed that struck deep roots in an alien soil.

If we take individual works of art, a few outstanding examples of colonial sculpture that far outshine in quality the art of the motherland may be mentioned here: the Buddha image at Chandi Mendoet in Java and the Prajñāpāramitā image now in Leyden museum, both based on the classic Gupta canons of proportion and poise, but far less impersonal and distant; the bronze four-faced image of Trailokyavijaya, with its magnificent pose and animation worthy of Rodin; the bronze seated image of Śrī, the goddess of fertility and wealth, in a pose of supreme charm and tenderness, from Java; the bronze walking Buddha from Suk'ot'ai in Bangkok museum, embodying a marvellous blend of serenity and suppleness, and outstripping in excellence the well-known figure in Birmingham museum; the Cambodian and Suk'ot'ai smiling Bodhisattvas, their superb blend of transcendentalism and compassion excelling that of their Indian counterpart, the famous Mathurā image; the Banteai Srei (Aṅgkor) figures of Tilottamā and the two contesting demons, and Rāvaṇa shaking Kailāśa, with their superb, dynamic vitality and rhythm of composition stressed by the background of trees, whose minute tracery and decorative finesse are worthy of Persian painting; and the lithe Earth-goddess of Siam in Bangkok Museum, the Venus of the Pacific, which reveals a sophistication and grace reminiscent of later Rajput sculpture and painting.

The Rise of Maritime Cults in the Colonies

Indian overseas enterprise threw up certain important maritime cults and legends, Brāhmanical as well as Buddhist. The most important of these is the worship of Agastya in Dvīpāntara Bhārata as the teacher of Śaivism (Śiva-guru) and the patron saint of seamen and

colonists; he is worshipped as the star Canopus (Javanese Valaing), which shines in the Indian Ocean and directs the course of ships. The Purāṇas mention that Agastya paid a visit from South India to Varuṇa-dvīpa, Śaṅkha-dvīpa, Malaya-dvīpa and Yava-dvīpa. In some Javanese images we find the Śiva-Guru, or Bhaṭṭāraka-Guru, Agastya associated with another sage, viz., Tṛiṇavindu, son of Paraśurāma, whose image is also found in Java. All oaths are still taken in Agastya's name in this part of the world. A second marine cult is the worship of Dīpaṅkara Buddha, or the Buddha of the Isles, met with in Java, Sumatra, the Celebes, Siam and Annam. It appears that the Amarāvati school of art greatly influenced Dīpaṅkara images of the Buddha up to the fifth century A.D. Thus the cult is probably derived from the Godāvarī basin. A third cult is that of Maṇimekhalā, whose original home is Kāveripaddinam on the Goromandal Coast. She is the guardian deity of mariners from the Tamil-land, and found her honourable place in the Cambodian and Siamese Rāmāyaṇa.

Religious Syncretion and Humanism

While the development of maritime cults in the Indian colonies and kingdoms across the seas is new, an even more significant trend in religion was represented by certain reconciliations and syntheses that could not be reached on Indian soil. The tendency towards syncretism is illustrated by the conjoint worship of Ardhanārīśvara, Śiva-Buddha, Śaṅkara-Nārāyaṇa, Hari-Hara, and Viṣṇu-Chaṇḍesvara-liṅga, and of the Trimūrti of Brahmā-Viṣṇu-Buddha dedicated to Śiva. The worship of Lokeśvara, derived from Bengal and Orissa, is also an illustration of the amalgamation of Śiva and Buddha. The Javanese poet Tantular says: 'The Buddha is one with the Trimūrti'. Such an aphorism embodies the culmination of a long process of religious syncretism that began on Indian soil centuries previously. Finally, there also developed the half-Brāhmanical, half-Buddhist worship of Mahākāla. The development of Mahāyāna Buddhism, with its various male and female divinities, encouraged religious amalgamation, which was also fostered by the tendency of various rulers to deify their ancestors as Śivas, Buddhas and Prajñāpāramitās. The tolerant intermingling of Śaiva, Vaiṣṇava, Śākta, and Hinayāna and Mahāyāna Buddhist influences found richer and more prolific expression in the Indian colonies and kingdoms than on the mainland;

and associated with it was a strong humanitarian movement featuring ministration to the sick and disabled throughout the region. An inscription at Angkor Thom records the founding of a 'house of Viṣṇu' by King Yaśovarman (A.D. 877–889), which was to provide hospitality to Vaiṣṇavas and food and medicines for the needy. In A.D. 1186 as many as 102 hospitals were constructed in Cambodia by Jayavarman. All over his kingdom these hospitals, manned by 82,000 men and nurses, were maintained for the distribution of medicaments and the free treatment of diseases, under the protection of Bodhisattva Bhaiṣajya, the Divine Healer. Even mosquito curtains (maśaka-ari) were provided for the sick inmates. With the spread of Indian culture went deep humanitarian compassion for the suffering, and in South-east Asia, China and Japan Bhaiṣajya-Guru, with his bowl of medicines and myrobalan-fruit, is still adored today.

The Building Up of Asian Unity

A common civilization was fashioned in the age of the Guptas from Kashgara to Śrī Vijaya, and from Chang-an to Anurādhapura. The spices, camphor, gold, tin, ivory, ebony, sandal and other rare goods of Further India were transported to the Mediterranean world in Indian ships, and India profited considerably from this inter-continental trade; as did Portugal, Holland, France and England in later centuries. There was also a brisk movement of far-famed teachers and scholars from country to country. One of the famous colonial teachers was Chandrakīrti of Suvarṇadvīpa, among whose pupils was Atīśa Dīpaṅkara, who later on became the abbot of Vikramaśila monastery and spread the Mahāyāna in Nepal and Tibet. Atīśa spent twelve years with him. Another famous international scholar was Mahāyāna-pradīpa, a venerable Chinese monk, pupil of Hiuen-Tsang, who travelled in Dvārāvatī, Ceylon and South India, and settled for some years in the monastery of Tāmralipti. Thence he proceeded to Nālandā, Mahābodhi, Vaiśālī and the Kuśi country, and died at Kuśinagara. He was mentioned by I-tsing. Many Buddhist monks of Bengal went to the monasteries of Śrī Vijaya and Anurādhapura for their education.

Contact between mother country and colony was not, however, invariably peaceful. There was the hundred years' war between the Chola Empire of South India and the Śailendra Empire of Śrī Vijaya, due to the latter's blocking of the Straits of Malacca, levying exorbi-

tant tolls in the narrow seas and choking Indian commerce in the South-east. Arab geographers, such as Masudi, Ibn-khordadz-beh and Ibn-Rosteh, all speak of the fabulous wealth the empire derived from the customs. Indian historians have failed to find the real clue to the long-drawn-out struggle in the Malacca Straits. The Śrī Vijaya empire, or Javaka (Zabag of the Arabs), after subjugating the port of Keddah, prevented direct traffic between India on one side and China and Indonesia on the other. This was noted by Masudi (A.D. 996). The Chinese writer Chaojukua is even more definite. He observes: 'This country (Śrī Vijaya), being on the sea, contains the most important point for trade, and controls the incoming and outgoing ships of all barbarians. Formerly they made use of iron chains to mark the boundary of the harbour. They wage war on water as well as land, and their military organisation is excellent'.

The Śailendra Empire, occupying strategic settlements on both sides of the principal straits in Indonesia, asserted some kind of a trade monopoly, as did the Portuguese in later centuries. History repeats itself. The Chola Empire, which had conquered Nicobar, parts of Burma, Malaya, Siam, Sumatra, including the capital city of Kadaram, and Śrī Vijaya, was ultimately defeated by the Śailendras, and the Empire of Śrī Vijaya included Ceylon in the middle of the thirteenth century.

For several centuries the Śailendra Empire served as the most important centre for the diffusion of Vaiṣṇavism and Buddhist Tāntrikism from Bengal, and for the Indianising movement in South-east Asia. The guru of the Śailendra dynasty was Kumāraghoṣa, an inhabitant of Gauḍa (Gauḍī-dvīpa-guru), who set up an image of the Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī in Śrī Vijaya in A.D. 782, achieving a unification of the Buddhist Triratna, the Brāhmanical Trimūrti, and all the other deities. An inscription found at Kalasan and dated A.D. 778 records that the famous temple of the goddess Tārā at Kalasan and a hostel for monks proficient in the Vinaya Mahāyāna were built at his instance. A matrimonial connection was established between the Śailendras and the Pālas; Balaputradeva was the nephew of Devapāla Deva of Bengal. Pāla art and culture had a considerable influence in the Śailendra Empire. Not far from Kalasan is Chandi Sewon, or the Thousand Temples, which was the centre of Buddhist Tāntrikism, introduced from the Pāla Empire of Bihar and Bengal. Prambanan, which is also not distant, embodies the apotheosis of Śaivism, according to Krom, just as Borobodur, which it rivals in size and grandeur, does of Mahāyāna Buddhism. In its power,

rhythm and vitality it represents the final consummation of Indo-Javanese relief sculpture.

Śaivism and Tāntrikism took early roots in Champā and Kambuja. A Sanskrit inscription, written in the chaste classical style the south-eastern rulers adopted from the mainland, relates that King Bhadra-varman established a liṅga in Champā towards the end of the fourth century A.D. which became a sort of national deity for the people. The liṅga is defined in the Piṅgalamātā Tantra as the primordial Essence or Symbol whence both creation and destruction originate. An inscription of Indravarman I, dated A.D. 799, refers to the installation of Śiva-mukha-liṅga, which came to be known as Indra-bhadreśvara. In Cambodia the mystic cult of Devarājā, intimately associated with the worship of Śiva-liṅga, was introduced by Jaya-varman II (A.D. 802–869), who came from Java to rule over Kambuja. His priest was Śivakaivalya, to whom Hiranyadāma, hailing from Janapada (in India), gave the four śāstras: Śiraśchheda, Vinasikha, Sammoha, and Nayottara. These Tāntrika texts are described as the four faces of Tumburu, or Śiva-Rudra, from whom they emanate. They all belong to the Left Current (vāmasrotagata), and came from Northern India, where the four different āmnāyas they embody were current in the sixth to seventh centuries A.D. In the inscriptions of Kambuja Śiva is often referred to as Chaturānana and Chaturmukha. The four colossal faces at Angkor Thom are probably those of Tumburu or Śiva-Rudra, and represent the doctrines of Devarāja or the Cambodian national cult of Chaturmukha liṅga introduced by Jaya-varman. With the change of capital the deity of Devarāja shifted from Mahendraparvata (Phnom Kulen) to Hariharālaya, and finally to Yaśodharapura (Angkor Thom). It may be recalled that Tāntrika Śaivism and Mahāyāna Buddhism lived side by side in the same temple for many centuries in Kambuja.

Throughout South-east Asia the laws, methods of government, and the titles and designations of officers became, and in some states still continue to be, Hindu. R. A. Gard has recently pointed out that the dominant Brāhmanical and Buddhist ideas provided the basis for an authoritarian ideology in the entire region, effected through a metaphysical correlation of the natural and human orders, the possession of official regalia, and the conduct of religious ceremonies. In Burma, Cambodia, Siam and Java, kings and their officials used to have 'cosmic' roles that were prescribed by Brāhmanical and Buddhist beliefs and symbolised by court ritual and coronation rites. In Cambodia the divine kingship associated with the cult of Devarāja,

was continued by Sūryavarman II (1011–1050) as Viṣṇurāja, and later transformed by Jayavarman VII (1181–c. 1251) into the Mahāyāna cult of Buddharāja. As late as the eighteenth century, Indian religious and metaphysical notions served to provide the *raison d'être* of autocracy. In Burma, among a people who belonged to the Hīnayāna school, which favoured democratic ideology and practice in the Saṅgha, King Aluṅgpaya (1752–60) utilised the Bodhisattva concept of Mahāyāna Buddhism to claim that he was a Divine incarnation of the Buddha.

The law of karma provided the basis of morals, just as the Mahāyāna and the Vedānta provided the basis of worship. The Gṛihya-sūtras supplied the pattern for domestic rituals and sacraments, and the regulations concerning food and drink. The entire heritage of Indian Sanskrit culture and Indian art and architecture came to belong to the people. The Sanskrit dictionary, the Amarakoṣa, is found in part or whole in such widely separated regions as China, Manchuria, Burma and Bali. The old literatures are saturated with Hindu myths, legends and fables. The large old Kavi literature of Java has absorbed a good deal of Indian classical material. Thomas observes: 'The professedly religious part of this literature includes a Brahmāṇḍapurāṇa, a Śaivite Bhuvana-koṣa, a Kamaliyayānikan, a Bṛihaspati-Tattva, and a Sūrya-Sevana, and there are works concerned with mantras. Further, there is nīti literature, Kāmandaka, etc., Śiva-Śāsana, Deva-daṇḍa etc., grammar, lexicography, medicine, cosmogony and history, many works representing the Mahābhārata and the Rāmāyaṇa, and also other poems, a Smara-dahana on the subject of the Kumāra-sambhava, a Kṛiṣṇāyana, a Kālayavanāntaka, an Agastya-parva, legends and romances of Java and Bali, and the Tantra literature, similar to the Pañcha-tantra, on which it is based'.

In Bali the social structure is represented by a tempered caste system. Although there are four castes as in India, viz., the Brāhmaṇas, Kṣatriyas, Vaiśyas and Śūdras, the application of Manu's regulations favouring anuloma and proscribing pratiloma marriage has led to mingling and softened the rigours of caste division in the island. The Balinese honour the Vedas and the Bhagavadgītā, meditate on Parama Śiva or Brahman, accept the duality of matter and spirit of the Sāṅkhya, and worship the Sun as the manifestation of Sada-Śiva, as well as Viṣṇu, his consort Śrī, Śiva's consort Ranadā, and Brahmā. The Pūjā of the Hindu gods and goddesses is offered by the priests (Pad-daṇḍas), with appropriate Indian mudrās and Purāṇa mantrams which they call Veda. The Balinese language

is full of Sanskrit words. It is interesting that the Indian classical form of marriage by choice (svayaṃvara) survives in Bali, where there is much caste pride among the Brāhmaṇas and Kṣatriyas.

In Java the Indian epics still exercise a considerable influence. The Ādi, Virāṭa and Bhīṣma parvas of the Mahābhārata, composed at the time of King Airlanga (A.D. 1037–1049), are still studied, and there is a summary of the Gītā; while the popular Javanese shadow-plays deal with such legends as those of Kṛiṣṇa, Arjuna, Bhīma, Ghaṭotkacha and Subhadrā, as well as the fight between Rāma and Rāvaṇa. The Javanese version of the Rāmāyaṇa, usually assigned to an earlier period, the reign of King Siṇḍok (A.D. 929-947), is partly a translation of the Indian epic and partly an adaptation of the Bhaṭṭi kāvya. Rāma, Hanūmān, Sugrīva, Kṛiṣṇa, Karṇa, Arjuna and Bhīma in particular command reverence as great heroes; while the Pañchatantra is also preserved in the old Javanese Tantri, and its fables depicted in college paintings.

Throughout Indonesia we find not so much translations of Sanskrit texts but rather summaries, adaptations and assimilations, echoing the spirit of the literature of the mother-land. We have such book-titles as Bhārata-Yuddha, Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa, Śiva-śāsana, and Brahma-ruchi. In Thailand and Indo-China, Pali literature is well preserved. Apart from the well-known canonical works and their commentaries, derived from India, there is also an extensive regional Pali literature on religious, philosophical and secular subjects. In Thailand the present script is Pali and a large number of Sanskrit words are included in the modern vocabulary. The coronation ceremony in the royal court and the Upanayana ceremony in the household follow the Indian pattern. The ecclesiastic head in Siam—the Saṅgkhert—is still nominated here by the king and has wide powers, including legislation. Even in backward Malaya a large number of Sanskrit words have become a part of the vocabulary, while Indian legends and fables are also well known. The Rāmāyaṇa is popular here as Hikayat-Chherirama, and shows filiations with Kṛittivāsa's Bengali version of the epic. The prefix Śrī appears in the names of the Sultans of Johore. In the kingdom of Laos Hīnayāna Buddhism is still not only the state religion but also strictly regulates work and limits the possessions of the common people. No family may possess any land beyond what is necessary for its subsistence plus a small surplus for the purchase of strict necessities, as estimated by the Buddhist priest; wealth cannot be accumulated for its own sake or for status. The decrepit, the infirm and the aged are supported by the

family or the community. Thus the Laotian Buddhists strictly follow the simple code of the Buddha, with its emphasis on absolute renunciation, as exemplified in the life of the bonzes. In Burma the Dhammathats derived from India still constitute important sources of law. Even in the distant Philippines some primitive peoples use the Indian alphabets.

The colonising enterprise of India and the spread of her culture from the Persian Gulf to the Gulf of Tonkin, from bleak Siberia to tropical Borneo, and from Socotra to Malenesia, forms a glorious, though neglected episode in the history of Asian civilization. It had its beginnings in the dim, prehistoric past, as has been pointed out by Coedes, who observes that 'in many places, such as Kuala Selinsing in the Malay state of Perak and Sempaya in the Celebes, Indian establishments had been installed on neolithic sites, which seamen coming from India had perhaps frequented from time immemorial'. In the historical epoch, however, Indianisation dates from the establishment of the Mauryan Empire, which witnessed the beginning of the march of Indian traders and monk-pilgrims across the Hindukush and overseas to Ceylon and Suvarṇabhūmi, or the Land of Gold. India colonised not by the might of arms but by peaceful trade and religious zeal; and she consequently achieved more permanent results. It was, indeed, no less than a process of building up, under the aegis of Buddhism, Brāhmanism, Tāntrikism, and their regional variants, a common civilization on the Asian continent, which continued up to the establishment of the Mongol Empire, with its capital first at Karakorum in Mongolia and then at Khanbalyk, or Peiping in China. Kublai Khan, who ruled one of the largest empires of the world, extending from Korea to Baghdad and from Moscow to Indo-China, tried to base Asian solidarity on one culture, one script and Lamaist Buddhism. But after his death in 1294 the unity of the Mongol Empire was purely nominal; the unity of Asian civilization was disrupted. Meanwhile other peoples, the Moslem Arabs, had become powerful in Western and Central Asia, and had penetrated into India and Further India. By the beginning of the fifteenth century they had spread into the Indian Ocean, where they introduced Islam by force; Malik Ibrahim, whose tomb bears an inscription dated 1419, being regarded as the first apostle of Islam in Java. During this century their commercial operations, based chiefly on Malacca, where Albukerque found a Hindu Prince, Paramisura, ruling in his time, were extended to the whole archipelago, and some twenty states accepted Islam as the state religion. The conquered

Hindus were driven to Bali and other islands, and there arose the Muslim Empires of Demak and, later, Mataram. It was then that Indian colonial enterprise ceased completely, torn from its vital roots in the homeland, where the Turko-Afghans had consolidated their power. India's cultural and colonial expansion in Dvipāntara covered, however, a period of well-nigh two thousand years.

Human history records no other movement to compare with the silent fusion of races, customs and manners, and the peaceful spread of civilization across the centuries among the less advanced peoples of Central and South-eastern Asia. For the first time in the history of the world the expansion of a people and their culture was identified with neither exploitation nor violence, but with the elevation of backward races to a higher level of religion, culture and morals. This is the fundamental key-note of Indian colonial activity: the diffusion of scriptures, icons and art motifs, and not expropriation nor economic victimisation; an expansion governed by the Mauryan ideal of Dharma vijaya and the Pāla ideal of Trailokya-vijaya. The high endeavour of Indian culture to knit together the less advanced races and peoples of South-eastern Asia in peace, goodwill and love was frustrated in the course of only two centuries, the fifteenth and the sixteenth, by the rise of Muslim empires and the establishment by the Portuguese of the fortified ports and factories in Malaya and the Indian Archipelago. Rulers and dynasties may change, however, and kingdoms and empires perish, but the abstract, ethereal art of the world's most splendid and colossal temple cities, Borobodur, Prambanan, Angkor Thom and Pagan, will endure as long as man aspires and dreams; and likewise the broad humanism, simple piety and sense of beauty of the South-eastern Asian peoples will survive the vicissitudes of history.

CHAPTER XIII

THE GOLDEN AGE OF INDIAN ART

FROM GUPTA CLASSICISM AND HUMANISM TO MEDIEVAL ROMANTICISM AND COSMISM

The Universal Myths and Images of the Gupta Renaissance

THE cosmopolitanism of the Greek and Scythian, and later on of the Kuṣāṇa, periods of Indian history, in which foreigners were socially assimilated, with the aid of Śaivism, Vaiṣṇavism and Mahāyāna Buddhism, promoted the absorption of Iranian and Hellenistic traditions into the indigenous art of India. The secularism of the age culminated in the development of figures of the Buddha, Śiva and Kṛiṣṇa almost simultaneously at the beginning of the first century B.C., in Gandhāra and Mathurā. It was left for the Gupta empire, covering a period of three centuries (A.D. 300–600), to carry secularisation still further, and embody man's supreme moral grandeur in images of the Buddha, Viṣṇu and Śiva on the one hand, and the rhythm and sensual charm of the human body on the other. After half a millennium of foreign onslaught, successful defence, and social assimilation, the half a millennium of order and stability inaugurated by the Guptas produced a cultural renaissance, an efflorescence of Āryāvarta. The national awakening is reflected in the final compilation of the Epics and the principal Purāṇas as a means of popular education, the codification of the Smṛitis, the systematisation of the philosophical schools of Brāhmanism and Buddhism, and the perfection of Kāvya in Sanskrit, which became the lingua franca of the country.

Brāhmanical and Buddhist Gupta art was the vehicle of the universal myths and images of the national, efflorescent culture of India. It was a sensitive, secular and anthropomorphic art, but it expressed aspects of universal consciousness. Pervading the images of the Buddha, Śiva and Viṣṇu, and the treatment of angels and

River goddesses, are the same clarity and poise that underlie the balance and rhythm of classical Sanskrit poetry. The same sensuous love of nature that we come across in Kālidāsa's Śākuntalam and Vikramorvaśīyam has left its indelible impress on the delicate tracery of Kalpalatā motifs in Gupta sculpture, and the full-flavoured depiction of thick, many-hued forests, blossoming trees, and herds of stately elephants and romping deer in the Ajantan frescoes. The gods and goddesses of the Gupta temples are sculptured with the same spiritual majesty and opulence of form and feature that we encounter in the metaphors and inventive fancies of the idealised heroes and heroines of Aśvaghoṣa, Kālidāsa and Bhāravi. It is noteworthy that in the Gupta epoch poetry and painting drew upon each other in creating refined and abstract types of hero, heroine and confidante, all profusely decorated with flower-garlands, gems and ornaments from a fairy realm. While literature often introduced painting scenes and portraits of the hero and heroine, painting echoed in its representation of human excellences the norms of beauty of classical poetry, recapturing the perennial love, delight and serenity of alakā (heaven) on the earth. Thus the spirit of Indian classicism in the Gupta period infused grace, balance and proportion into poetry, drama, painting and sculpture alike. In the theatre, in the frescoes in palace, pleasure-pavilion and sanctuary, and in the stories of love and renunciation, we are always brought back to the ethereal alakā of classical poetry and the transcendental nirvāṇa of classical philosophy. All the evils and imperfections of saṃsāra fade away in the infinite wisdom, blessedness and charity of alakā, or nirvāṇa. That which is serenity of mind in inner yoga, or Being, embodies itself in suave, classic forms expressing all human relations—the entire realm of Becoming, the theme of the fine arts. Perhaps the relative isolation of India from the rest of the world, owing to the disruption of the Roman Empire in the West and the Han Empire in China (A.D. 20), helped to promote this complete articulateness of Indian classicism.

Classicism in Indian Art

In the field of Indian sculpture classicism gives clear expression to the synthesis of the earlier popular cults of Yakṣa and tree worship, the Buddhist and Jain heresies, and the Brāhmanical renaissance, which were welded together by the upsurge of Bhāgavatism, as well as by the new literary and scholastic tastes and conventions

of the period. The voluptuousness of the Yakṣīs on the railing pillars at Mathurā is reproduced, but with refinement and a stern discipline of surface and outline, in the tribhaṅga poses of the goddesses Tārā, Gaṅgā and Yamunā, Māra's seductive daughters, and the maiden chowri-bearers in Gupta sculpture. The exquisite ornamentation of the lotus prabhā maṇḍala (padmātapatrachchhāyā maṇḍala, in the words of Kālidāsa), the subtle modelling of the monk's transparent robe, and the sensitive naturalistic treatment of the female body, with prominent breasts and hips and a profusion of jewellery, are all on a par with the metaphors, similes, and linguistic embellishments of the high style of Kālidāsa, Bhāravi and Bhavabhūti. Like Gupta literature, Gupta art presents the norms of metaphysical rather than corporeal human beauty: the face is a perfect oval; the eyebrows are curved like the bow of Kāmadeva; the eyes are like lotuses; the lips, like the ripe bimbā fruit; the arms and shoulders are elephantine; the torso, leonine; in the tribhaṅga pose the female body sways like a creeper, the full breasts resembling bunches of flowers; and the lakṣaṇas of the Superman (lokottara) integrate the various classical metaphors of extraordinary power and grace.

Gupta art derives its charm from its sensuous modelling of the human form; but owing to the rich literary background of symbols and motifs, this is never naturalistic or realistic in the narrow sense. It marvellously blends the sensibility of human flesh with the profound dignity and serenity of the human spirit. It establishes, indeed, iconographical conventions in respect of form, poise and movement that hold good for subsequent centuries in India and abroad. But it does not permit its liveliness and rhythm to be subordinated to stereotyped inconography or stylistic idiom. In fact the rules of iconography and the traditions of style in Indian art are not imperatives imposed from without, but spring from the mind and heart of the people. It is communal myths and symbols that govern literary as well as sculptural forms and motifs, drawing and playing upon the inner message. There is no doubt that bodily features and proportions are exaggerated under the influence of symbolisation, but the people can easily read the hieratic dialect of the art, whatever faith or creed it serves. Each action, movement or finger gesture of the deity is clearly understood in the context of his or her special mood or attribute, and so is the type of implement, weapon, head-dress and jewellery used. Buddhism, Jainism, Brāhmanism, and folk-cult found their gods and goddesses, spirits of the woods and waters, serpents, streams and phalli, not mutually antagonistic or segregated

from one another, but all assimilated and integrated by the metaphysical mind and the syncretic art and religion of the age; though each could be distinguished by its bodily peculiarities or movements, which were laid down by iconographic rules. But if anyone still thinks the message of this art was solely religious he has only to look below the cult-image, even of the Buddha, to the pedestal, with its standing dragons and sitting lions amalgamated into a pair of fanciful romping creatures, or to the elaborate arabesque carvings of familiar intertwined creepers, with leaves fluttering in exuberant display, subserving the general decorative pattern of the temple portal.

Myth and Legend in Art

There is also as much emphasis on narration as on the cult; the stories of the Jātakas, the Purāṇas and the Epics are represented in unending series of elegantly carved panels, where the secular and the religious merge into each other. In the Deogarh temple, belonging to the Gupta period, we have a large number of panels illustrating scenes from the Kṛiṣṇa and Rāma legends. The cow-herds of Gokula, Rukmiṇī and Sudāmā, and the five Pāṇḍavas, as well as Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa and Sītā, Ahalyā and Agastya, Śūrpaṇakhā and the golden deer, are all there, depicted with a wonderful blend of simplicity and vigour, delicacy and vitality. These compositions constitute the prototypes that have been imitated, like the representations of the birth-legends of the Buddha, in Prambanan in Java and Angkor in Cambodia, far beyond the Ganges valley of their origin.

The entire spiritual heritage of India, from ancient myth and legend to cosmology and metaphysics, was expressed and consolidated in Gupta art, which became the vehicle and embodiment of a unified national culture. The core of the Gupta Empire, its sacred homeland, was the valley of the Ganges and Jamuna—the two holy rivers, which were depicted in religious art for the first time, flanking the gateways of Gupta temples. Kālidāsa eloquently refers to them as attendants of Śiva: 'Gaṅgā and Yamunā, as they served the god, assuming visible forms and holding chowries, resembled a flight of swans, although their river forms were changed' (Kumārasambhava, VII, 42). The humanistic note of Gupta art is embodied in the popular aphorism; 'Beauty is never intended for sin' (rūpaṃ pāpavṛittaye na),

which Kālidāsa quotes with approval in the Kumārasambhava (v. 36). The poet also remarks that the dower of beauty is intended for the delight of the husband alone (priyeṣu saubhāgya phalā hi chārutā, Kumārasambhava (v. 1)). In classical Sanskrit kāvya there are rapturous descriptions of physical sensuous beauty, but this is always a reflection of inner spiritual beauty. The norm that the beautiful is the true and the good dominates life, manners and art in the Gupta age. The Buddha vanquishing the armies of Māra, and Śiva burning Kāmadeva to ashes when the fair Pārvatī disturbs his serene contemplation (Kumārasambhava III. 72), represent the great myths of the Gupta age; while the self-immolation of the Bodhisattva before the tigress, and its Hindu counterpart, Dilīpa sacrificing himself to the lion as it pounces upon Nandinī, the cow under his protection, epitomise its spirit of compassion and renunciation. The classicism of Indian art springs from the Gupta social and cultural ideal, the combination of discipline with enjoyment, renunciation with obligation, and wisdom with beauty and goodness, which finds such exquisite and eloquent expression in Kālidāsa's poems and dramas.

The Standardisation of a Lokottara Physiognomy in Art

Nowhere is this better illustrated than in the portrayal of the Buddha, Śiva and Viṣṇu, whose iconographic forms and patterns are finally standardised by Gupta sculpture. The treatment of the Buddha is characterised by delicacy and refinement, a fine tracery in the modelling of the robe, curly hair, omission of the ūrṇā, rounded lines on the body, an elaboration of the mudrās, and a profoundly serene face, with large ornamental halo, or prabhāmaṇḍala behind; the whole showing astonishing harmony, serenity and vigour. We may refer here to the celebrated Sārnāth and Mathurā images. The former commemorates the delivery of the Buddha's first sermon at Mṛigadāva in Banarasa, and he is shown in the attitude of discourse. The Wheel of the Law and the Master's five earliest disciples, together with the woman donor of the image and her child, are appropriately carved on the pedestal. In the carving of the Mṛigadāva discourse scenes at Gandhāra, the figures of the Buddha and his disciples are sculptured on the same scale. At Sārnāth, however, the Teacher and the Turning of the Wheel are eternal, metaphysical; and the Buddha is therefore carved much bigger, true to the Mahāyāna teaching. The

composition is most delightful, breathing poise, profundity and sweetness, which are stressed by horizontals, triangles, ovals and circles. The stable triangular pattern is overhung by the elaborately decorated circular nimbus. The hovering angels, who bear flowers in their hands and are deftly integrated into the nimbus, which consists of a pattern of foliate forms fringed with a border of pearls, produce an atmosphere of ethereality. Nicety and simplicity of composition here blend with a serene linear rhythm embodying the complete cessation of desire and perfect clarity. In this way, for the first time in human culture, Gupta art invested the human figure with the highest moral value.

Similarly, the lofty Mathurā figure of the Buddha is one of the world's most significant symbols of man's moral and intellectual glory. Behind the half-closed eye-lids a profound knowledge of the mystery of the world-process lies hidden; while the benign, comprehending smile, not visible in the more celebrated Sārnāth image, reconciles the impersonality of nirvāṇa with the Master's profound pity for the world. The image, it should be remembered, is contemporaneous with the teaching of Mahāyāna idealism at Nālandā, and is, in our view, one of its purest embodiments. It may also be recalled that Śāntideva's exquisite poem of Mahāyāna compassion, the Bodhicharyāvatāra, was composed towards the end of the seventh century A.D.

The Buddha as the Great Ascetic (Mahā Śramaṇa) is more silent and introspective, whether he is seated or standing, than the Bodhisattva, who is a prince. In the standard iconographic type the latter wears a tiara, a jewelled necklace and a girdle, and his infinite compassion for the world's misery is exquisitely revealed in his gracious smile, finger-gesture of assurance (abhaya), and sometimes a slight inclination of the head and tilt of the body, imparting a marked flexibility and supple quality to the image. While technically the pose recalls the Tribhaṅga of the Indian dance, psychologically it suggests the compassionate approach of the Bodhisattva to the suppliant, so characteristic of Mahāyāna bhakti. From India and Ceylon to China, Korea and Japan, and from Gandhāra and the Tarim basin to Burma, Siam, Java and Cambodia, a rich variety of figures of the Buddha and Bodhisattva have been sculptured through the centuries. It is remarkable that in spite of the delineation of divergent Indo-Aryan, Dravidian, Hellenistic, Mongolian and Khmer facial types, we find that for the full sculptural revelation of supersensible serenity and compassion—the gift of the Mahāyāna to Asia—

the different countries all take their cue from the Gupta type. As a matter of fact every region, indeed every race, in Asia has sought to evolve in its iconography a lokottara physiognomy true to the Buddhist ideals that received such abiding and glorious expression in Gupta sculpture.

The Gupta Nude as the Asian Norm of Feminine Beauty

The Gupta type of the Buddha and Bodhisattva produced at Mathurā, Sāñchī, Sārnāth and Bodh-Gayā has become the norm and model of Asian Buddhist sculpture. Similarly Viṣṇu, with his elaborate royal crown and garland of flowers (vaijayantī), and Śiva, or Lokeś-vara, with his matted locks gathered upwards and held together by a serpent (bhujaṅgamanoddhajaṭākalāpaṃ, as Kālidāsa describes it in the Kumārasambhava III, 46), constitute the generic types and subjects of art that have gone far beyond the confines of India. In addition Gupta art has largely determined norms in the treatment of female nudes. In early art, from Bhārhut to Sāñchī, the Yakṣīs are draped, or else they are semi-nude, wearing waist cloths with the ends hanging in stylised folds. In the early Kuṣāṇa period, for the first time in Indian art, we come across nude figures wearing fine transparent silk or muslin. Since then transparent drapery has become an accepted convention in Indian art, as an enhancement of feminine charm, whether of divinities, angels or nymphs. But Gupta art, as we noted earlier, replaces the provocative display of feminine elegance of the Kuṣāṇa period with classical poise, with a plastic style that is perspicuous and charming yet introspective and supra-mundane. Among the remarkable Gupta nudes that quiver with rhythmic sensual charm and remain at the same time serene and chaste are the river goddess Gaṅgā (now in Boston museum), the Gwalior apsarā following her husband, Pārvatī clinging to Śiva at Aihole (now in Bombay museum), and the various amorous pairs and the dying princess of the Ajantā frescoes. Such norms of feminine beauty, which move to and fro between literature and art (compare Kālidāsa's famous description of Pārvatī, 'stooping a little with the weight of her full bosom and wearing a garment of the hue of the morning sun, thus resembling a walking creeper covered with foliage and bending under lavish, breast-like clusters of flowers'), have served as models for the sculpture of Borobodur, Siam and Cambodia. Western art historians refer to the effect of the established Greek

convention of nakedness in the public gymnasia and Olympic games on realistic art, and on humanism generally, and the blighting effect of the prohibition on the representation of the nude in religious art by the Council of Trent in Europe in 1545. Similarly in India the universally accepted convention of transparent drapery lies at the very root of the superb treatment of human, and especially feminine, loveliness, and its effect on the history of Indian art can hardly be exaggerated.

In classical art as well as kāvya the characteristics of feminine beauty are: 'full breasts that resemble blooming lotuses and inverted golden pots', 'rounded and symmetrical thighs that resemble plantain-stalks', and 'slender waists that resemble the middle of an altar'. The swell of the full bosoms in contrast with the thinness of the waist also serves the technical object of making the female figure appear 'as if breathing', according to the Viṣṇudharmottaraṃ. Furthermore, the navel should be deep and distinct. Kālidāsa speaks of Pārvati thus: 'The delicate line of down which enters her deep navel after passing the knot of her garment at the waist appears like the shooting ray of the central gem of her girdle, which is other than white (a sapphire)'. In all Indian figures from Bhārhut onwards the navel is always shown prominently. If the wisdom of the sage has its stylised marks, poses and gestures so has feminine grace in Gupta art. The serene charm and purity of the female nude of the Gupta period, whether river-goddess or gandharvī, apsarā or Tārā, the queen of Bodhisattva, have set the norm for the delineation of idealised feminine attributes in Asian art. Gupta art shines as much in its representation of the transcendental wisdom of the god or yogī as in that of the moral and spiritual glory of woman. This was, of course, the outcome of the broad humanism and balance of spirituality and materialism in that noble and luxurious age.

The Canons of Indian Art

The aesthetic principles and traditions of India were formulated and systematised in the Viṣṇudharmottaraṃ and the Śilparatnaṃ, both belonging to the Gupta period. The Viṣṇudharmottaraṃ classifies paintings into 'literal' or 'realistic', 'lyrical', and 'secular' or genre (nāgaraṃ), and enumerates the kinds of painting suitable for temples, palaces and private residences. The greatest stress is laid on the expression of moods through appropriate rhythm, life-movement

or Chetanā, which is, indeed, the key-word in Indian art, and on the necessity of conforming to certain ideal proportions or norms of beauty. Yaśodhara's commentary on the Kāmasūtra refers to the six Limbs or Canons of painting, namely: (1) Rūpa-bheda, or distinction of rhythms of form; (2) Pramāṇam, or norm, or ideal proportion; (3) Bhāva, or expression of rasa; (4) Lāvaṇya-yojanaṃ, or grace; (5) Sādṛiśya, or conformity to the object; and (6) Varṇikā-bhaṅga, or colour scheme. The famous Six Canons of Chinese painting of Hsieh-Ho (479–501) closely follow the Indian Six Limbs, though the order of classification is somewhat different: (1) Mental revolution gives birth to the life rhythm; (2) To bring out the anatomical structure with the help of the brush; (3) To draw forms in conformity with nature; (4) To make the colours correspond to the nature of the objects; (5) To distribute the lines in their proper places; (6) To propagate the forms by passing them on into the pictures.

Both the Viṣṇudharmottaraṃ and the Śilparatnaṃ deal in detail with these essentials of painting. That rhythm is the essence of painting and sculpture is clearly indicated by the observation in the Viṣṇudharmottaraṃ that it is impossible to attain a proper expression of mood in painting without a preliminary knowledge of the art of dancing. Not merely do vibrant gesture and pose characterise the great paintings of Ajantā and Bāgh but a dynamic rhythm of gesture and movement invests the Gupta and the post-Gupta reliefs and sculptures with rare combination of charm and vigour. These are derived from the general popularity of the art of dancing in the country, which was adopted both as a social accomplishment and as a ritual in temples and festivals for centuries. There is indeed a great similarity between dancing and religious images in India, the identity of spirit in both being systematically brought out by the one hundred and eight dance poses described by Bharata Muni, the author of the Nāṭya Śāstra, and sculptured in the gopāśramas of the temple of Chidambaram, the celebrated seat of the cosmic dance of Śiva Naṭarāja.

In the Pratimālakṣaṇaṃ, or the Lineaments of Images, attributed in the Tibetan version to the sage Ātreya and based on a Buddhist text, elaborate measurements for the head, face and limbs of images are given, along with certain broad canons of image-making. All these are presumably of general application. 'The head of the image should be made like an umbrella; this produces wealth, good crops and prosperity. Well-drawn eyebrow lines on the forehead bring eternal good fortune. If the image is well made, the subjects become full of

happiness; if the image has a conch-shell-like neck then it is always the bestower of success. A body like a lion enchances plenitude and strength; arms shaped like elephants' trunks fulfil all desires and ends. Images with a well-shaped belly bring forth plenitude and prosperity; thighs shaped like a plantain tree increase the stock of goats and sheep; while well-shaped calves to the legs make the village prosperous. An image if it has well-carved feet, causes good conduct and learning. Thus has the excellence of images been described'.

One of the most important iconographic conventions is the standard length of 120 or 125 aṅgulas. This is called daśatala or uttamadaśatala proportion. One text states that 'the images of Viṣṇu, Brahmā and Śiva should be made according to the uttamadaśatala (124 aṅgulas); of Śrī, Bhūmi, Umā and Sarasvatī, according to the madhyamadaśatala (120 aṅgulas)'. The Buddhist Pratimālakṣaṇam enjoins that images of such deities as Brahmā, the goddess Charchikā, the Ṛiṣis, the Brahmarākṣasa, the celestial beings, and the Buddhas should be made according to daśatala measurement, and no images of others should be made in this manner. The whole image is then divided into ten parts (bhāga) or sections, each of which is equivalent to the size of the face (mukha), or "head," the tala or unit of twelve aṅgulas. Ganguli aptly observes in connection with this Indian iconographic convention that it intimates something beyond the forms of created beings: 'Both Polycleitos and Virtruvius, the Greek and Roman authors of the Canons of Proportions, adopt the law of Eight Heads—the normal human standard—as the basis of their system of proportion, while the Indian sculptor adopts for his images the daśatala, or the ten-head measure; that is to say, he devises and adopts for images proportions which are above the ordinary human standard'.

In the making of images, contemplation is always enjoined. In the Śukranītisāra (IV. 10, 4. 70–71) we read: 'The image-maker should prepare the images that are to be used in temples by means of the formulae of meditation that are proper to the gods whose images are to be made. It is for the successful attainment of identity in contemplation (dhyāna yoga) that the lineaments (lakṣaṇa) of images are recorded, so that the mortal image-maker may be undistracted in meditation. For it is in this and in no other way, least of all with a model (pratyakṣa) before his eyes, that he can accomplish his task'.

The work connected with image-making, in all its minute details, should be done in a covered and secluded place, in a devout manner

and with full control over the senses. While engaged in this work the image-maker should always meditate on the god whose image he is fashioning. The form or image of the god is of course super-sensuous, an aspect of the Supreme Spirit, not material. In the Śilpa-śāstras the qualities demanded of the pratimā-kāraka or image-maker are unflagging attention and identification, leading to perfect skill in operation, as in yoga: 'O Thou Lord of all gods, teach me in samādhi how to carry out all the work I have in mind'. 'Having contemplated, let the sculptor do'. The Śilpa-śāstras create iconography; but it is the samādhi of the devout craftsman, his empathy or identification, that creates art. It needs to be emphasised that art is fostered by the delineation of iconographic features with the specific evocative verse (stava), formula of meditation (dhyāna), and obeisance (praṇāma) to the particular deity (svārādhya devatā). In fact contemplation, rite, and image-making become facets of the same process, the creative activity of the human spirit.

The non-Hieratic Character of Gupta Art

Such is the strength of the new sculptural conventions, which seek to reveal the Anuttara Jñāna, or the supreme wisdom of the yogi, that the figures of the Buddha, Bodhisattva, Śiva and Viṣṇu are all moulded in the same pattern. They can be distinguished only by certain external signs or decorative devices. This did not escape the discerning eye of Hiuen-Tsang; in describing the image of the Jain Tīrthaṅkara he remarks: 'The figure of their Great Master they stealthily class with that of the Tathāgata; it differs only in respect of clothing; the elements of beauty are absolutely the same'. The statue of the Jain Tīrthaṅkara at Mathurā Museum, several Viṣṇus from Mathurā, and the statue of Nara-Nārāyaṇa at Deogarh all exhibit in their nude torsos the same massiveness of proportions and smoothness of modelling, which produce a feeling of super-sensible majesty, a sense of poise and wisdom, that is characteristic of all types of Gupta sculpture. It is not the creed or faith that is important but art, which gives expression to the great devotional fervour of the Gupta period. The picture of Śiva in yogic meditation in Kālidāsa's Kumārasambhava has an affinity with the seated Buddha image in Buddhist art, just as the serenity and piety of the Bodhisattvas of Mahāyāna Buddhism are repeated in the profound tranquillity and sweetness of the Viṣṇu images and the Śiva-mukha-liṅgas of Gupta

sculpture. The supreme quality of Gupta plastic art is revealed as much in the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas as in the Ekamukhī and Chaturmukhī Śiva-liṅgas and the standing Viṣṇu images; as much in the river goddesses and Apsarās as in the luxuriant floral decorations on the door posts.

Buddhist art is human and anthropomorphic; Brāhmanical art is largely super-human and cosmic. But such was the emphasis on secularism and humanism in the Gupta age that representations of the Rescue of the Earth by the Boar Incarnation, of Viṣṇu reclining on the mythical serpent, and of the cosmic Viṣṇu (Viśvarūpa of the Bhagavadgītā), with his circular nimbus depicting the planets, were all given a human setting very unlike the superhuman images of medieval sculpture. This was also due to the intense Kṛiṣṇa-bhakti of the Gupta age. The magnificent images of Viṣṇu at Mathurā and Aihole, of Viṣṇu's rescue of Gajendra, of Rāmachandra's redemption of Ahalyā, and of Nara-Nārāyaṇa at Deogarh, reconciling the impersonality of Brahman with Viṣṇu's profound tenderness of jīva, 'which has no other refuge in the seven worlds', are significant as the artistic expression of spiritual feelings rather than metaphysical principles. In some representations of the Bodhisattva and Viṣṇu the profound compassion of God is reflected in the same transformation as that which distinguishes Gothic from Romanesque art. In the devotional literature of the Mahāyāna and the Pāñcharātra we find the same emotional transfiguration taking place in religious consciousness.

The Harmony between the Sensuous and the Spiritual in Ajantan Painting

Gupta classicism also left its profound impress upon Indian painting, which reached its perfection in the Gupta age at Ajantā and Bāgh. The Ajantan paintings are at once human and divine; and it is the balance they achieve between the earthly and the spiritual, the outcome at once of Mahāyāna Yogāchāra and the crystallisation and acceptance of new artistic conventions, that accounts for their unrivalled excellence.

The qualities of earthiness and sensuousness in the Ajantā paintings are subordinated to the same literary norms of abstract beauty that govern Kālidāsa's conception of human charm and elegance; the amplitude of forms and gestures is ordered by dramatic expressive-

ness and the moving pageantry of life subdued by the dominant conception that every episode of life is human and divine simultaneously. The scenes of human passion and sorrow, and the supreme ordeals of the Bodhisattva triumphing over human wickedness by his gentleness, compassion and goodwill, symbolise in Mahāyāna thought the nature and inevitability of saṃsāra, from which deliverance is vouchsafed by the infinite wisdom and charity of the Bodhisattva. Saṃsāra and nibbāna thus merge into each other, and Ajantā art derives its sincerity, pathos and enchantment from the Mahāyāna's beatific vision of the human spirit.

Among the great masterpieces of Ajantā's pictorial art, the most outstanding examples are: the blind hermit-parents with their child, bound together by a wonderful feeling of tender pathos; the collapse of the delicate, charming princess, probably the queen of the Ṣaḍdanta Jātaka legend (as sculptured at Amarāvati and Goli, in the second and third centuries A.D.), with the spectre of imminent death leaving her unruffled amidst the bewilderment of her youthful attendants; the meeting of Yaśodharā and Rāhula with the Buddha after his enlightenment, dominated by their mixed feelings of expectancy and awareness of the spiritual status of the Master; and the king's punishment of the beautiful woman, who lies prostrate with her hands touching his feet in trembling supplication. The entire procession of nature and human life, in dark jungles and verdant meadows, in royal courts and luxurious pavilions, in the sage's hermitages and the householder's retreats, is pervaded by a radiance from the supersensible world, importing into the adventures and excitements, joys and sorrows of saṃsāra the order and permanence of transcendental values. Over the beauties and pleasures of the earth so marvellously depicted in the frescoes broods the spirit of the Mahāyāna Yogāchāra idealism founded by Asaṅga, who, it is worth noting, resided for sometime at the monastery of Ajantā and declared that the world was no more than the dream of dreams. Not merely the world but thought too is ephemeral, a perpetual series of moments. Even the universal sub-conscious basis of all, the Ālaya-vijñāna, is in perpetual flux, arising and perishing, carrying with it all kleśa and activities, and preventing sentient creatures from passing out of existence. The Great Deliverer is the Bodhisattva, who holds a Blue Lotus and is at the centre of the whole composition, both formally and metaphorically. The slight, gracious inclination of the head, the tranquil pose just vibrating into movement, and the exquisite gesture of the hand, which resembles the pliant lotus

whose flower it holds, symbolise His profound compassion for the world's misery. It is the Mahāyāna deity's all-pervasive pity and tenderness that bring the whole of creation back to Him, just as the beholder's eye, ranging through the manifold forms of the human, animal and vegetable world in the fresco, returns to the enormous dominating figure. But in the pulsating light and dark of the deep cave, man's vision, saṃsāra, the Bodhisattva, and his dark complexioned wife or Sakti (an indication of the development of Buddhist Tāntrikism) are all unreal, like the matrix of Ālaya-vijñāna with all its myriad forms, throbbing, proliferating and perishing with the pulse of time. The Bodhisattva Padmapāṇi, in which Ajantan art reaches its supreme peak, is comparable in the history of the world's art only with the Madonna of Nuremberg, which achieves for Gothic sculpture an equally rare balance and harmony in the treatment of the human figure in a linear composition. In Yogāchāra Vijñānavāda, even the Buddha and Bodhisattva are illusions. The Padmapāṇi provides a superb example of metaphysical and abstract rather than corporeal human beauty, summing up the entire teaching of the Mahāyāna and the classicism of Gupta art, and furnishing an inspiring model for some of the greatest plastic compositions of China, Java, Siam and Cambodia. Asian art, reflecting the poise and classicism of the Gupta art of the fourth and fifth centuries, is sensuous and piquant, yet balanced and serene.

The Gupta Heritage

The disintegration of the Gupta Empire and the Hūṇa invasion did not eclipse nor disturb the remarkable cultural movement that it ushered in. As a matter of fact a large number of independent kingdoms arose which became the seats of a high culture, no longer Buddhist but Brāhmanical. The Vardhanas of Thāneśvara, the Gurjara Pratihāras and Gahaḍavālas of Kanauj, the Pālas of Bengal, and the Chālukyas, Rāṣṭrakūṭas and Pallavas of the South renewed the glories of Gupta culture and art. From the final shattering of Hūṇa power in India by Yaśodharman, the ruler of Mandasor (A.D. 533) and conqueror of Mihirakula, to the raids of Mahmud of Ghazni at the beginning of the eleventh century, India enjoyed complete immunity from foreign invasions except for the Arab conquest of Sind, which was a local episode and had hardly any political consequences for the country. Thus in the post-Gupta period India's

intellectual and religious ascendancy in Asia continued, along with her supremacy in world trade and commerce, which brought gold and silver flowing to her shores from the Roman Empire of the West and the newly exploited Golden Chersonese of the East. Mahodaya-śrī under Harṣa and Yaśovarman, Kāśmira under Lalitāditya and Vinayāditya, and Pāṭaliputra under Dharmapāla became the celebrated centres of a tolerant and luxurious art and culture. The great artistic achievements of the post-Gupta age were based on figure sculpture and monolithic temple-building, seen at their best at Ajantā and Ellora in the Deccan, Bādāmī, Aihole and Pattadakal further south, and Māmallapuram on the Bay of Bengal. All these cover the early medieval art of India from the sixth to the eighth century A.D. The keynote of the whole epoch is regional initiative and development in art through inland communication, the complete eschewing of Hellenistic-Roman influences owing to the confusion in the West, and the broad migratory current of culture and art flowing from the mother-land to the Hindu colonies and kingdoms beyond the seas.

Medieval Brāhmanical Art, Supra-human and Dramatic

While Gupta art reflects the culmination of Buddhist culture, medieval art embodies the renaissance of Purāṇic and Tāntrika Hinduism. This may be best illustrated by the vivid contrast between the classic Buddhist art of Ajantā and the medieval Brāhmanical art of Ellora. The art of Ajantā is anthropomorphic, clear, sharp and serene, like the myth of Mahāyāna Buddhism, of which it is a superb expression. The art of Ellora is supra-human, agitated, dramatic and romantic, like the myth of Purāṇic and Tāntrika Hinduism, which it embodies so magnificently. The elusiveness and romantic quality of Ellora come from Tāntrikism. Its conception of Mahāmāyā as at once enchantment and wisdom, and of Mahā-Śakti, which beguiles man yet at the same time opens the way to his world-transcending enlightenment, underlies the harmonious blend of sensuousness and cosmic mystery, of human desire and supernatural tension in the handling of the colossal human-cum-superhuman tableaux. At Ajantā Buddhist India worships Man the Master and his destiny in nirvāṇa, which is more glorious than the order and harmony of the cosmos. At Ellora (seventh to eighth centuries) Brāhmanical India worships God and Śakti, Power and Tension,

the mysterious and the supra-human; and yet what is elusive, transcendental, and inscrutable manifests itself in the passion and aspiration of man; the dramatic emotional conflict of man becomes a part of cosmic manifestation and destiny.

Buddhist art, being humanistic and serene, is easier to appreciate than Brāhmanical art, with its tension and mystery. The latter rejects the Buddhist notion of the primacy of Man in the scheme of the universe, and expresses cosmic, trans-human moods and values in plastic and poetic symbols. Creation and Destruction, Passion and Freedom, in their supra-mundane aspects are the main concerns of medieval Brāhmanical art, which finds joy at once in the infinite tenderness of love and compassion, which perpetually creates life, and in the unrestricted fury of destruction that perpetually rebuilds and transforms it. In medieval sculpture Śiva is the principle of dynamic tension or change and Viṣṇu that of order and permanence, the two achieving unity or synthesis in the human soul, attuned to the majestic rhythm of the cosmos; while Māyā, in her aspects of Pārvatī, Kālī and Lakṣmī, is the supra-mundane power of wisdom and delusion, among the gods as well as in the world of living creatures. Into this neutral, supernatural frame of reference the myth and poetry of Purāṇa and Tantra have introduced in addition the triumph of goodness over evil, of unity and stability over chaos and disorder, and of silence and withdrawal over creation and enjoyment.

The Divya-kriyā of Archetypal Deities

The colossal Śiva-Bhairava engaged in grim fight against the demons, accompanied by both his consorts, the gaunt, terrifying Kālī as well as the charming Pārvatī, in the Daśāvatāra temple at Ellora is among the marvels of Indian sculpture. The transcendental fury of destruction directed at wickedness, the other aspect of the radiation of God's redeeming compassion and love, is suggested by the sweeping, majestic diagonal posture. This is supported by the movements of the various hands and the heavy diagonal thrust of the trident piercing the demon Ratnāsura, who begs for mercy. The entire group of figures, including Kālī and Pārvatī, who can only be discerned within the cave temple itself, vibrates with supramundane tension and power. Similarly, the wonderful portrayals of Śiva-Naṭarāja, whose glory is depicted in kāvya in Kālidāsa's Meghadūta,

and the cosmic dance of Chāmuṇḍā or Kālī, described in Bhavabhūti's Mālatī Mādhava, of Rāvaṇa shaking Kailāśa and his humiliation at the hands of Śiva (in several versions), and of the slaying of Hiraṇyakaśyapa by Viṣṇu in his lion-form, and of Mahiṣāsura by the many-armed Durgā, all embody more than human majesty, pride, indignation and agony of soul—inevitable accompaniments to the establishment of an ordered harmony out of the scheme of creation. In Rāvaṇa shaking Mount Kailāśa (a theme referred to by the poets, from Vālmīki to Kālidāsa) we find the demon rather than Śiva symbolising the tumult of supramundane power. The assymmetry of his wide-flung multiple arms reflects the futility of demoniac pressure against the throne of God; for with perfect ease and elegance Śiva holds him in check with His outstretched toe. Pārvatī, however, is terrified by the quake of the mountain and clutches her husband's arm. Her female attendant flies into the depths of the cavern; but far to the right Śiva's attendant sits vigilant and unperturbed. There is hardly any Indian sculpture in which the contrasting attitudes of gods, demons and men are so dexterously and vividly underlined by the architectonic devices and the interplay of light and darkness within the cave. Thus are metaphysical notions and transcendental moods dramatically expressed in momentous myth and tableau. The supramundane activity (divyakriyā) of archetypal deities playing out the conflicting generic attitudes and emotions of the human soul embodies, in Nietzchean fashion, medieval India's acceptance of universal tension and pain, power and insight.

The difference between the treatment of figures at Bādāmī, Ellora and Elephanta on the one hand and at Māmallapuram, where we come across the great carving of the Descent of the Ganges, on the other, is considerable. Although the themes are the same, cosmogonic and derived from the various Purāṇas and Tantras that came to dominate Indian thought from about the fourth century A.D., the Dakkhini sculptures are characterised by a massiveness and most summary treatment of body and limbs, often underlined by the elaborate decoration of crown, apparel and weapons, whereas the South Indian sculptures show a nervous, though disciplined, sinuosity and the mellifluous outline of a somewhat lyrical style, reminiscent of the Amarāvatī tradition. On the whole the dynamic rhythm of mass and the concentrated vigour of rounded forms set harmoniously in the architectonic order, characteristic of the medieval art of the Deccan, utilise most fully the possibilities of chiaroscuro in cave sculpture; and they are true to the eternal nature of the cosmic or

mythical themes. Yet in spite of the majesty of the themes and the iconographical conventions, it is remarkable how an astonishing vitality in the treatment of human forms, derived from the sensuous fullness of life that we see developing at Sāñchī, Ajantā and Amarāvatī, triumphs in the rock sculpture at Ellora and Elephanta. The freshness of the youthful figures of Śiva and Pārvatī in their numerous poses in Kailāśa and Elephanta are the result of a balanced combination of supple curves with breadth and heaviness, of the restfulness of stone with the surge of energy springing from the unformed rock and the vibrating light and darkness, plastically conditioned.

The Maheśvara Image at Elephanta

The post-Gupta Brāhmanic renaissance absorbs the confluence of the cultures of Āryāvarta and Dakṣiṇāpatha at various levels. It assimilates the ancient phallic cults of liṅgaṃ and yoni, Paśupati-Rudra and the Mother-goddess with the purity and discipline of Yoga and the absolute idealism of the Vedānta. It harmonises the southern wisdom of mother-earth and the human body with northern subtlety and refinement of spirit. The magnificent set of sculptures at Elephanta represents in particular a synthesis of Āryāvarta and Dakṣiṇa tradition, both spiritually as well as artistically. They blend the largeness, weightiness and sustained power of the Dakṣiṇa form, adapted to architectonic composition in the rock-cut cave, with the suavity, sublimation and sensitive modelling of the temple images of Āryāvarta.

Four millennia of the religious fears, anxieties and fulfilments of the primitive aboriginal races, foreigners and Indo-Aryan peoples, with their ethno-regional differences, seem to be epitomised in the strange, composite image of the Maheśvara, representing the threefold aspects of the Cosmic-Spirit, the serene Śiva-Mahādeva (the Absolute, in the middle), the frowning skull-crowned Aghora-Bhairava (the Terrible, on the right), and the charming, bejewelled Umā (the Goddess, on the left). This majestic figure was fashioned with the artistic excellence of an epoch in which the high-water mark, the peak of perfection, of the rich cave sculpture of India was reached. In the rock cave the marked contrasts of light and shade enhance the dramatic effectiveness of events that are conceived, as all life is in Indian philosophy, as illusions set against the matrix of Eternity, symbolised by the unlimited and nebulous darkness of the pristine

grotto. Whereas Gupta sculpture reaches the zenith of plastic expression, the expression of the clarity and bliss of the human mind, through Yoga, the sculpture of the Deccan finds the bliss and serenity by delving deeper and deeper into cosmic life and destiny, where both angelic as well as elemental, dark forces are astir. In the grander and weightier images of the Deccan, man's equipoise is the order and balance of the stellar universe, and his tension the pent-up fury of the cosmic cataclysm. From the viewpoint of formal values, the sculpture of the Deccan represents, for India, the climax of dynamic balance and sustained rhythm and tension in the plastic mass, born of the womb of the unformed rock, and rich with the silence and piled-up power of the earth and the mystery and elusiveness of the atmosphere, vibrating with light and darkness in the caves.

Iconography versus Formal Values

Iconographical canons were developed in the medieval period in the Śilpa-śāstras, and both Hiuen-Tsang and I-tsing mention the Śilpasthāna Vidyā as the second of 'the great śāstras of the five vidyās' that constituted the basis of general education and culture in India. But these canons hardly interfered with the sculptor's freedom of treatment, except in mediocre works, and they served mainly as aids to the contemplation of divinities in worship. On the other hand, they were well understood by the people and promoted a profound intimacy between art, contemplation and ritual in a community of culture. Above all, such iconographical conventions were dominated by the Purāṇic syntheses of Vaiṣṇavism and Śaivism, which are perpetuated by Ellora and Elephanta. At Ellora we have not merely figures of the ancient Yakṣis, accompanied by dwarfs of the Kuṣāṇa period, but also river goddesses of the Gupta middle-land, and not only Śaiva but also Vaiṣṇava sculptures, distributed impartially, and exhibiting unusual vigour and elegance. Similarly at Elephanta on the left of the massive triple-headed figure of Śiva-Maheśvara we have the entire heaven (Vaikuṇṭha) of Viṣṇu. It is the syncretic spirit of Purāṇic Hinduism, with its worship of the Trinity, Brahmā-Śiva-Viṣṇu, as the Indivisible One, so nobly revealed in the kāvyas of Kālidāsa, that subordinates in medieval Indian sculpture a hieratic iconography to formal sculptural values, and accounts for its amazing freshness and vigour.

CHAPTER XIV

THE THIRD REFORMATION

THE RISE OF ŚAṄKARA VEDĀNTA

Śaṅkara's Victory and Spiritual Heritage

AT the close of the first quarter of the ninth century a brilliant young Brāhmaṇa monk was engaged in a philosophical conquest, or Digvijaya, which extended from Chidambaram to Kāśmīra, and from Kāśī to Kedāranātha: 'He came, he saw, he conquered'. Rarely in the annals of metaphysical duels in India can a man so learned and yet so young have won such an easy victory against the redoubtable exponents of so many theologies, mythologies and philosophical systems. Thus was ushered in the third Reformation, concerned with the exposition and organisation of an uncompromising transcendental monism, the Kevala-Advaita. The valiant scholastic thinker was Śaṅkara (788–828), who grounded the Vedānta, i.e., the gist and culmination of the Vedas, on the reconciliation and synthesis of the various current philosophical schools, true to the broad spiritual tradition started by the Upaniṣads.

Śaṅkara's Advaita Vedānta was strikingly different from the Vedānta of the Mahābhārata and the Maitri and Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣads. Its basic concept is the notion of Māyā, or illusion, which appears in the Ṛigveda, where Indra is referred to as assuming many forms through his illusions. The Upaniṣads further developed the Māyā notion. The Śvetāśvatara explains the illusory nature of the world and describes the Lord of all beings as māyāvin. Śaṅkara developed his fully-fledged concept of Māyā from the Kārikā of Gauḍapāda and from the Buddhist notion of Avidyā. According to Śaṅkara the world is not only due to Māyā but *is* also Māyā. The keen incisive mind of a supreme scholastic was combined in Śaṅkara with the tolerance and broad intellectual sweep of a real philosopher and the imagination of a true poet. After his most remark-

able success in the metaphysical combats he won the title of Ṣanmatasthāpanāchārya.

Śaṅkara was born in A.D. 788, into a Nāmbūdrī Brāhmaṇa family in the village of Kaladi in Malabar. After the completion of his studies he became a monk, obtaining his initiation from a great ascetic teacher, Govindapāda. Such was his fame as a yogī that legends attribute his conception to a miracle of Śiva and maintain that he became a master of all the vidyās, sacred and secular, in his early childhood. He is also said to have caused a river, Vegavatī by name, to come to his mother's door in order to save her the trouble of going far for her ablutions. Govindāchārya was the disciple of Gauḍapāda (seventh century), who assimilated into the Advaita scheme some of the best of the metaphysical speculations developed by the Buddhist Vijñāna-vāda and Mādhyamika schools, without reliance on any theological text or revelation. Gauḍapāda probably belonged to Bengal (Gauḍa), where the Buddhist intellectual climate was responsible for his use of many Buddhist metaphors, arguments and words. Some scholars consider that he may even have been an actual Buddhist. But on the whole the consensus of opinion appears to be that the ideas he puts forward were developed independently of the Buddhist system by an exponent of the Vedānta hailing from Bengal. Thus Śaṅkara's spiritual lineage, stemming from Gauḍapāda, favoured a synthesis based at once on logic as well as on intuition, or aparokṣānubhūti.

The post-Gupta era was characterised by the syncretic trends of the various Purāṇas and Tantras, whose influence became wide and deep. These works, which often exaggerated the claims of sectarian deities among the masses, remained half-reconciled. The Vedas and their adjuncts, belonging to the older Brāhmanism, comprised an ocean of wisdom too deep and inaccessible for the ordinary person, while Buddhist scholars had poured scorn on the ancient scriptures for generations. Even the Bhagavad Gītā, the epitome of Brāhmanical wisdom, is too eclectic and uncertain in its emphasis for the common man. Into a world of changing theologies, mythologies and philosophical systems, bewildering in their complexity, Tāntrikism, whether of the Buddhist, Siddha or Hindu variety, introduced heterodox modes of worship full of extravagances and abominations, making confusion worse confounded.

The Renovation of Hinduism

Śaṅkarāchārya's great task was to reach a fresh integration and synthesis of Brāhmanism. In his Sūtrabhāṣya (ii, 2, 27) we read that the entire world was being agitated (ākulī-kriyate) by the Buddhists. The renovation of Hinduism, so that it superseded the popular Buddhist philosophy and discipline, was largely the work of Śaṅkara. In the seventh century Hiuen-Tsang found Buddhism already in a state of decay in India. The degradation brought about by the Vajrayāna rites and the immorality in the monasteries and nunneries discredited it. According to tradition Nāgārjuna expelled thousands of monks and nuns in order to save the purity of the Buddhist order. The Buddhist doctrines of void and absolute idealism did not suit the common people, and disregarded the social side of life. Śaṅkara's exposition of the non-duality of Brahman ran on parallel lines to the Vijñāna-vāda of the Mahāyāna, elaborating as he did the theories of Gauḍapāda's celebrated Kārikā. Śaṅkara's spiritual grandfather comes perilously near to Mahāyāna nihilism. Gauḍapāda denies the reality of the objects of perception as well as of causation and change. The phenomenal world is constituted by the swift vibrations of the mind, and resembles the flaming wheel constituted by the fire-brand as it is swung round and round (alātachakra). The empirical world exists only by virtue of ignorance or avidyā. 'There is no dissolution, no beginning, no bondage, and no aspirant; there is neither any one avid for liberation nor a liberated soul. This is the final truth'. It was the genius of Śaṅkara to free the Vedānta from the pure subjectivism of the Buddhist Vijñāna-vāda and posit both Brahman as well as the world, which according to him does not depend upon the percipient. Śaṅkara says in his Upadeśa Sāhasrī: 'Only he who has abandoned the notion that he has realised Brahman is a knower of the Self and no one else'. According to Radhakrishnan, Śaṅkara's is an ontological idealism and not an epistemological one. 'He rejects the theory which identifies the essence of a thing with our perception of *it*. To say that the self is the foundational reality is not to say that our awareness constitutes the reality of the object'. Western thinkers are apt to attribute a life-chilling, inhuman sterility to the Advaita Vedānta, little appreciating the grandeur of the cosmic Universal-Self (Ātman-Brahman) in that serene silence reached through the intellect- and logic-destroying paradoxes of Bādarāyaṇa and Śaṅkara. And this really represents 'the gist of the whole meaning of the

Vedas' (Vedānta)—the culmination of the monistic Ṛig-vedic heritage.

Śaṅkara had also to deal with a new menace to Brāhmanical culture, from Moslem proselytisation backed by the might of arms. Here and there in the Malabar coastal towns, such as Koulam, Muslim traders had already been settled for about a century and were known as Mappillas; and King Cheraman Perumal, the last of the kings of Malabar ruling at Kodmagallur, became a convert to Islam. Conversion was proceeding steadily, and mosques were being built and receiving zealous support from the leaders of the Muslim community, who were employed in South India as ministers, admirals, and farmers of revenue. Thus Islam was gaining influence and entrenching itself. Śaṅkara must have realised the peril to Hindu culture that this represented; the conversion of the King of Malabar must have been a sensational event and eye-opener.

The Demolition of the Pragmatic Mīmāṃsā School

Śaṅkara's first intellectual encounter was not with the Buddhists or Jains, but with the exponents of the Mīmāṃsā school of philosophy. Founded by Jaimini, and developed under the influence of Śabara Prabhākara and Kumārila (seventh and eighth centuries), this school gained great ascendancy in India in the seventh and eighth centuries. The Mīmāṃsā doctrine is pure and simple ritualism, grounded on the belief that if man performs the acts enjoined by the Brāhmaṇas, such as the Five-fold sacrifices (yajña), the offering of oblations to the sacred fire (havana), and charity (dāna), and refrains from the forbidden acts, viz., drinking and injury, he obtains emancipation (mokṣa). Mahāvīra, Śabaraswāmī, and Kumārila are, like the Buddha, completely silent about God. Heaven is not clearly defined. The Mīmāṃsakas take a pragmatic view of life and strongly emphasise human obligations, which in the Vedic system of rituals relate man to the cosmic scheme of life. Their doctrine, though socially defensible, was a serious challenge not only to the older Bhāgavatism of the Gupta age but also to the Purāṇic theism of the post-Gupta period, which received a fresh accession of strength from the Tamil mystical movement. On Śaṅkara's memorable debate in Malwa with Maṇḍana Miśra, the leading supporter of the Mīmāṃsā at the time, hung the issue whether India would accept as a national religion a soul-less ritualism, a self-sufficient Dharma, or system of

obligations and ceremonials, without the inner spirit. Śaṅkara, of course, won, and India was saved from what the Gītā calls hypocritical religion (mithyāchāra), which became predominant in the seventh and eighth centuries in India, along with temple worship. But such was the bitterness created that he was dubbed a 'concealed Buddhist' by the Mīmāṃsakas.

Śaṅkara's reconciliation of the claims of the Vedic scheme of duties and pure knowledge rests on this stressing of the relativity of moral and spiritual progress (adhikāra bheda). Karma is not an indispensable means to mukti; it is an aid to self-discipline and self-knowledge, and consequently an indirect and remote means (upakārika). The importance of Mīmāṃsā, which stresses karma exclusively as the means to mukti, consists today largely in its logical apparatus and canons of criticism and interpretation, i.e., its method of intellectual discipline. For centuries in India the courts of justice always included the Mīmāṃsakas. Śaṅkara's system begins as 'an enquiry into Brahman' in contrast to the 'enquiry into Dharma' of Pūrva-Mīmāṃsā, which he demolished.

The Profound Philosophical Synthesis of the Kevala Advaita

With Śaṅkara the Upaniṣads, the Brahma-Sūtra and the Bhagavad-gītā constitute the three-fold basis of the Vedānta. In his famous commentaries on the Prasthāna Traya he discussed and rejected the views of all the current philosophical schools of India, the Sāṅkhya, the Nyāya, the Vaiśeṣika, the Pūrva-Mīmāṃsā, the Pāñcharātra and the Pāśupata, as well as Buddhism and Jainism. From Buddhism and Śaivism, through Gauḍapāda, Śaṅkara adopted and incorporated the Vijñāna-vāda and the Śūnyavāda of the Mahāyāna and the Spanda-vāda of the Pāśupatas. Many of Śaṅkara's theories are still older. As Ingalls observes, 'The double standard of interpretation, ultimate truth and conditioned truth, was used by the Buddhists, as was also a theory of avidyā not very different from Śaṅkara's. The world as vivarta, or perversion, of Brahman instead of pariṇāma, or development, is to be found in Bhartṛhari. The theory of adhyāsa, or false super-imposition of the non-self on the self, goes back to the Sāṅkhya. It is the synthesis of these various theories that is Śaṅkara's and is something quite new in the history of Indian philosophy'. It was Śaṅkara's broad intellectual sweep, brilliance and catholicity that accounted for his phenomenal success;

while rejecting many of the developments of Buddhism and Śaivism he assimilated their main doctrines. Yet his conception of the Advaita carried on the direct doctrinal tradition of the Upaniṣads and the Brahma-sūtras. The Padmapurāṇa states that the Māyā doctrine is an untrue science and is only concealed Buddhism. But here Māyā is misunderstood. Māyā in the Vedānta is the illusion superimposed upon reality as an effect of ignorance.

The Crest-Jewel of Wisdom (Viveka-Chūḍāmaṇi), one of Śaṅkara's profound philosophical works, puts the matter thus: 'As long as there is this error, so long this (connection with jīva) created by false knowledge exists; just as the illusion produced by error that the rope is a snake lasts only during the period of error; on the description of the error no snake remains: it is even so'. The pure self without limiting 'screens', or upādhis, is beyond all error or illusion. The upādhis are represented by name, form, action, class, attribute and division. In another celebrated work, Self-knowledge, or Ātmabodha, Śaṅkara says: 'By negating all the upādhis through the help of the scriptural statement 'It is not this; It is not this', realise the oneness of the individual soul and the Supreme Soul by means of the great Vedic aphorisms'. 'Thou art the universal, only self, though unaware of it'. The well-known injunction of withdrawal or negation, 'Neti, Neti', is derived from the Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad (II, iii, 6); while the great Vedic aphorisms include: (1) 'That thou art' (Sāma-veda, Chhāndogya Upaniṣad VI, x, 3); (2) 'This Ātman is Brahman' (Atharva-veda, Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad, Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad II, 5, 19); (3) 'Consciousness is Brahman' (Ṛig-veda, Aitareya Upaniṣad V, 3); and (4) 'I am Brahman' (Yajur-veda, Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad I, iv, 20).

Śaṅkara culled from the Vedas and the Upaniṣads the various formulae and mantrams of meditation on Ātman-Brahman that have since been followed by monks and the lay intelligentsia throughout the country. The great formulae, or mahāvākyas, of Vedāntic illumination were recovered by the leader of neo-Brāhmanism from the vast sea of Vedic truth, which is unfathomable even for the average intellectual.

The Philosophia Perennis

It is noteworthy that in promulgating his Kevala Advaita theory Śaṅkara is far less concerned with the refutation of Buddhist philo-

sophy than with other current philosophies. In fact in his Bhāṣya on the Brahma-Sūtra his criticism of the Sāṅkhya system is more trenchant and comprehensive. In the Advaita Vedānta the dialectic of the universe is the manifestation of a non-dual transcendent and yet immanent principle, from which issues the world of names and forms, and which underlies and impels it. The Sāṅkhya dualism of transcendent non-material monads and *natura naturans*, of Puruṣa and Prakṛiti, is thus surpassed. The Vedānta completely rejects both the basic Sāṅkhya notions of the plurality of life-monads and the substantial character of nature, or the world. According to the Vedānta, the pure Self is the supreme, devoid of all attributes and definitions, higher than 'God', which is the greatest and most subtle of all illusions. We here find Śaṅkara and Freud meeting on common ground. The self is the only reality, sheer consciousness, untramelled by any upādhis, contents, qualifications or limitations—complete bliss. His famous commentary on 'Vijñānaṃ Ānandaṃ Brahma' in the Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad, which runs over several pages, ends with the assertion that Brahman knows neither knower nor object of knowledge, it simply is knowledge; Brahman finds bliss in no object, it simply is bliss.

To many Western thinkers, however, such a grand conception, derived from the Upaniṣadic mystic way, is not true philosophy. In his well-known commentary on the Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad, together with Gauḍapāda's Kārikā, Śaṅkara has a magnificent passage on the aim of philosophy. Philosophy deals with the totality of data, rooted in the co-ordination of man's three states, of waking, dream and deep-sleep. When systems of philosophy are based on the waking state only they become multifarious and contradictory. Beyond the waking, dream and deep-sleep stages is the Fourth, or Turīya, the Transcendental, which is supreme, immortal and changeless—the essence of the self. Śaṅkara invokes it in these words:

'May the Turīya which (through Māyā), having identified itself as the entire universe, experiences (in the waking state) the manifold gross objects of enjoyment through ignorance and attachment; which again, during the dream state, experiences, being enlightened by its own light, the subtle objects of enjoyment, the objects that are brought into existence by its own internal organ; and which, lastly, in dreamless sleep withdraws all objects (subtle as well as gross) within itself, and thus becomes free from all distinctions and differences; (may this Turīya, which) is ever devoid of all attributes, protect us'.

The doctrine of the four states of consciousness, waking, dream,

dreamless sleep and the Fourth, or Transcendental, of which we have the most magnificent exposition in Gauḍapāda's Kārikā, serves in the Vedānta as the 'stairway' by which the self ascends beyond illusion-producing thoughts, feelings and experiences, and ultimately establishes itself in its pristine majesty (mahimā). Then is the self realised as the Blessed, Peaceful One, Who is the only cause of the origin and dissolution of the world (Śaṅkara's Nirvāṇa-mañjarī). The differentiation of the four states constitutes the core of the introspective psychology of the Vedānta-yoga.

In the Vedāntic samādhi man does not even permit his mind to enjoy the bliss that the yogī experiences, for the mind is not separate from ātman-brahman and the bliss is eternal; the mind should without effort realise its true matrix neither in the inactivity or oblivion of deep sleep nor in distraction by external objects in the waking state of consciousness, nor again in attachment to the yogic happiness, but in complete Silence, when it does not manifest itself in any form of external object and activity but realises the non-dual Brahman in all forms and names of the manifested world in the same manner; the mind then resembles a flame of light kept in a windless space (Śaṅkara's commentary on Gauḍapāda Kārikā, III–44–46). This experience is ineffable, profoundly mystical. The ultimate truth of Śāṅkara Vedānta is that there is only one entity called the Brahman or jīva; there is no separation between them.

The Paradoxes of Self-abasement and Self-exaltation

With all his personal monotheism, there is a profound mystical vein in Śaṅkara's thought which stems from the powerful South Indian theistic movements of the Adiyars and Alvars; movements that had been waxing stronger and stronger from the fifth century onwards, with a pronounced emphasis on sin and self-abasement, individual responsibility and, above all, on God's immanence and redeeming love for the least and lowest. Śaṅkara sings to Viṣṇu:

'Even when I am not duality's slave, O Lord,
The Truth is that I am Thine, and not that Thou art mine:
The waves may belong to the ocean,
But the ocean never belongs to the waves'.

In his hymn to the Divine Mother for the Forgiveness of Transgression he says:

A wicked son is sometimes born,
But an unkind mother there cannot be.

Nowhere exists in all the world
Another sinner to equal me;
Nowhere, a Power like Thyself
For overcoming sinfulness:
O Goddess, keeping this in mind,
Do Thou as it pleases Thee'.

But Śaṅkara is not the creature and servant of the deity-in-human-form but of the inscrutable and transcendental One. From her emerges both the universe and its Lord. Thus does he offer his prayer to Annapūrṇā, the Divine Nourisher of the Universe:

'Thou who bearest the manifold world of the visible and the invisible,

Who holdest the universe in Thy womb;
Thou who severest the thread of the play we enact upon this earth,
Who lightest the lamp of wisdom, who bringest joy to the heart of Śiva, Thy Lord;

Thou who revealest all the letters, from the first to the last;
Mother of the cosmos, gross and subtle, and of its Lord as well;
Ruler of earth and heaven and the nether world,
Who dost embody in Thyself the waves of creation, sustenance and dissolution;
Eternal, uncaused Cause, who art the thick darkness of the cosmic dissolution;
Thou who bringest desire to the heart of man, who dost bestow on him well-being in the world;
O Thou, the Queen Empress of holy Kāśī, divine Annapūrṇā,
Be gracious unto me and grant me alms!'

Śaṅkara purged Tāntrikism of its abominations and extravagances and upheld Samayāchāra, as against the Vāmāchāra Śaktism of the Bhairavas, Gāṇapatyas, Kāpālikas and Pāśupatas. One of the authoritative works of Śaktism, the Prapañcha-sāra-Tantra, was written by Śaṅkara. Here the conception of the primordial Śakti, or Energy, is as important as that of the underlying Absolute Brahman. Śaṅkara is also credited with the composition of the Waves of Bliss, or Ānandalaharī, one of the most profound and sincere books of hymns to the Mother of the Universe on the plane of bhakti.

He inveighed against both ritualism and idolatry. In his Aparokṣānubhūti he combats the exaggerated claims of yoga. 'The best posture is neutrality towards all objects. The best regulation of breath is the contemplation of the delusion of the world. The best withdrawal of the senses from objects is the identification of self with them. The highest contemplation is the realisation of the Whole, the Absolute, or the Brahman without reference. The highest samādhi is the complete cessation of any kind of mental activity'. An uncompromising transcendental monist as he was, Śaṅkara through his paradoxical mind-destroying Sūtras reached an affirmation of the majesty and dignity of the self beyond the bounds of sense, logic and word hardly paralleled in the history of the world's religious experience.

'Death or fear I have none, nor any distinction of caste;
Neither father nor mother, nor even a birth, have I;
Neither friend nor comrade, neither disciple nor guru;
I am Eternal Bliss and Awareness—I am Śiva! I am Śiva!
I have no form or fancy, the All-pervading am I;
Everywhere I exist, and yet am beyond the senses;
Neither salvation am I, nor anything to be known:
I am Eternal Bliss and Awareness—I am Śiva! I am Śiva!'

The Versatility of Śaṅkara's Genius

Śaṅkara's unique achievement in rehabilitating Brāhmanical culture was due to his rare combination of the talents of a metaphysician and mystic, religious dialectician and poet, and leader and social reformer. Some of his hymns, such as the Ānandalaharī, Dakṣiṇāmūrti, Śiva-aparādha-kṣamāpana, Hastāmalaka and Bhaja Govindaṃ, are characterised by great charm, tenderness and smooth flowing rhythm, in spite of their metaphysical background; while his Cudgel for Delusion, or Mohamudgara, whose metre is influenced by apabhraṃśa, or folk poetry, is one of the best poems in Sanskrit literature. The following is a superb passage from it which is reflected upon by thousands in India:

'Ephemeral is the life of man
As rain-drops on the lotus leaf;
Association with the wise, even for a moment,
Is the boat that ferries across the sea of saṃsāra'.

The intellectuals of modern India are mostly adherents of the Advaita Vedānta; they accept Śaṅkara's interpretation of the Brahma-sūtras and seek to relate their notions and paradoxes to the conclusions of modern physics, mathematics and metaphysics.

The young monk-scholar was also a man of practical common sense and administrative ability. For the first time in Indian religious history the foundations of Brāhmanical monachism, after the model of the Buddhists and Jains, were laid by Śaṅkara, under the authority of four monasteries in the different quarters of the continent, Śṛiṅgeri in the south, Govardhana in the east, Dvārakā in the west, and Badarī in the Himālayas. The entire Hindu community of India was to be ruled from these monasteries by the ten different orders of ascetics, or Saṃnyāsis (daśanāmīs), that he founded. The ascetics themselves were graded according to their degree of self-realisation into four categories, the Brahmachārins, the Daṇḍins, the Parivrājakas and Paramahaṃsas; and there was neither caste nor ritualism nor sacerdotalism among them, as in the Buddhist order. Such a system still persists in the country. Śaṅkara avoided the mistake of the Buddha by excluding women from the ascetic orders. For the laity Śaṅkara stressed that the way to the supreme knowledge begins with a sense of detachment; and indeed detachment is the royal road for both ignorant and wise seekers (Śaṅkara's commentary on the Bhagavadgītā, XII. 12). Until perfect knowledge is obtained, Śaṅkara insists in the Upadeśa-sāhasrī, all prescribed duties and works must be scrupulously performed. His famous commentary on the Bhagavad Gītā stresses on the whole detachment and goodness rather than premature saṃnyāsa. Thus a strenuous moral discipline and a code of duties without ego-attachment are an integral part of the Vedāntic scheme of life. True knowledge is the aim; elaborate technical learning is of little avail. 'You foolish man, worship the Divine Shepherd: When your appointed time comes and death confronts you, no repetition of Pāṇini's rules will save you'. If Śaṅkara had not died prematurely at the age of thirty-two, the spiritual unification of India that he achieved through the efforts of his Daśa-nāmī-saṃnyāsis might have been a prelude to a common political consciousness in the country that could have successfully withstood the Muslim onslaught.

Sister Nivedita observes: 'Western people can hardly imagine a personality like that of Śaṅkarāchārya. In the course of a few years to have nominated the founders of no less than ten great religious orders, of which four have fully retained their prestige to the present

day; to have acquired such a mass of Sanskrit learning as to create a distinct philosophy, and impress himself on the scholarly imagination of India in a pre-eminence that twelve hundred years have not sufficed to shake; to have written poems whose grandeur makes them unmistakable, even to foreign and unlearned ears; and at the same time to have lived with his disciples in all the radiant longing and simple pathos of the saints—this is the greatness that we must appreciate but cannot understand. We contemplate with wonder and delight the devotion of Francis of Assissi, the intellect of Abelard, the virile force and freedom of Martin Luther, and the political efficiency of Ignatius Loyola; but who could imagine all these united in one person'. To the versatility of his genius he added youthful vigour and inexhaustible zeal, which enabled him to traverse the whole of India, combining in himself the roles of scholastic, evangelist and organiser, arguing, expostulating, censoring and infecting everyone with the grandeur of his philosophical system, and of his vision of a united, spiritual India.

The Influence of Vedānta

Such a united India was for monks and laymen alike, for philosophers and men of the world, and for Brāhmaṇas, Śūdras and women. Many long centuries after the Buddha, Śaṅkara made out the strongest case for the eligibility of Śūdras and women, for the highest knowledge (cognition of Brahman), which according to him has nothing to do with Varṇa or Āśrama duties. In the post-Gupta period, the Mahābhārata and the Purāṇas, sometimes called the fifth Veda, were specially composed for the instruction of Śūdras and women. But in respect of Vedic wisdom, Śaṅkara, citing many instances, such as Vidura and Dharma-Vyādha from the Mahābhārata and Vāchaknavī from the Upaniṣads, insisted on the equality of Śūdras and women in status and privilege. 'Knowledge is open to everyone who is desirous of it', Śaṅkara declares, 'prayer alone qualifies for knowledge'. His implacable antagonist, Rāmānuja, denounced him for his view that the Śūdra was not excluded from knowledge of Ātman-Brahman, and tried to prove that this was erroneous. Śaṅkara's emphasis on the rights of the lowest caste and of women, and on the metaphysical principles of Varṇa, in which it is not the accident of birth but the spiritual status that matters, sounds strange to modern ears. For the Great Reformation that he initiated in the country, not

without opposition and opprobrium from orthodox groups, was frustrated by the Muslim conquest.

The Śāṅkara Vedānta was a great triumph of Indian metaphysical speculation, absorbing as it did the principles of ignorance or avidyā, suchness or tathatā, and the illusory character of the universe, products of centuries of Buddhist thought. For many hundreds of years it generated a vast amount of philosophical literature dealing with the absolute idealism and mysticism of the Kevala-Advaita; while from the eleventh to the sixteenth centuries the schools of Rāmānuja, Madhva, Nimbārka and Vallabha rose by way of accepting the various degrees of advaita. For generations the philosophical speculations of the various sectarian theisms all sought a formal defence and exposition on the basis of the Vedānta-sūtras, after the pattern of Śaṅkara's classic treatment. The philosophical developments of Vaiṣṇavism and Śaivism in the South, the Tāntrika and Chaitanya-Vaiṣṇava schools in the North-east and the medieval mystical schools of Northern India, from Gujarat to Bengal, were all fecundated by Śaṅkara's doctrines of the identity of Brahman-Ātman and the veil of Māyā. Many are the mystics and prophets in Indian religious history, attached to the worship of Śiva and Durgā, Kṛiṣṇa-Gopāla or Rāmachandra, Bāsava or Viṭhovā, who are also thorough-going Vedāntists. The new formal logic (nava-nyāya), which was first formulated by Gaṅgeśa in the twelfth century, with precise definitions and discussions of logical conceptions, inferences and consequences, and which before long won its place as the dominant subject of study throughout India, itself became an adjunct to Vedānta speculations. Thus the elaborate philosophical discussions of advaita, dvaita, viśiṣṭādvaita, śuddhādvaita and bhedābheda were all orientated to the Vedāntic scheme of thought. Even the entire Alaṅkāra-śāstra was based on speculation concerning Ānandarasa, which was identical with the Brahmānanda of the Upaniṣads and Vedānta Sūtras. Such was the all-pervasive influence of the Śaṅkara Vedānta doctrine. The Vedānta represents one of India's great metaphysical interpretations of the highest universal consequence. It blends philosophy, characterised by complete freedom from dogma, ritual and social and institutional contexts, with a transcendental mysticism; and it is entirely free from the limitations of faiths and beliefs derived from particular inspired books, prophets and races.

CHAPTER XV

THE TANTRIKA SYNTHESIS AND ITS TRIUMPH

FROM VAJRA TO SAHAJA, FROM YOGA TO KARUṆĀ

The Ancient Cult of the Female Principle

WORSHIP of the sexual principle has an ancient and obscure history in India. The Indus Valley had its cult of the phallus and worship of the Primordial Mother in common with the Mediterranean region. The lotus plant issuing from the womb of a Harappa goddess and the emblems of male and female organs that we come across in the Indus culture are prototypes and traditions that still live in Tāntrikism. Along with worship of the sexual principle magic and charms, which play such important roles in the Atharva-veda, were also handed down by the Indus civilization. In Ṛig-vedic culture we find many goddesses, the most significant being Aditi, Pṛithvī and Sarasvatī, with her variants Iḷā and Bhāratī. They are the Great Mothers of the Indo-Aryans. In one Ṛigvedic hymn Sarasvatī is mentioned as supreme among the mothers and among the goddesses. The famous Devī-Sūkta of the Ṛigveda, which constitutes the genesis of Purāṇic Śakti worship, is a hymn to the Mother Goddess, who is identified with Brahman, the Primal Being, and Vāk. In the age of the Upaniṣads and the Brāhmaṇas we come across Umā (Babylonian Umma) as well as Ambikā, Bhavānī, Bhadrakālī and Durgā. It was Umā-haimavatī who could tell Indra what Brahman was. The Mahābhārata describes her as the great goddess (Mahādevī or Maheśvarī), identical with Sarasvatī and Sāvitrī, the mother of the Vedas and the source of all knowledge or revelation.

From very early times a distinction was made between legitimate and illegitimate worship of the sexual principle. We have clear evidence of this from Guṇāḍhya, who describes the worship of Mahākāla with Tāntrika rites at Ujjayinī in about the first century

B.C. By this time a clear division had been established between proper and improper practices. The ancient Āgama texts embodied the principles of legitimate, right-hand Tāntrikism; and they formed the basis of Abhinavagupta's Tantrāloka, which belongs to about A.D. 10. Mahāyāna Buddhism was from the beginning influenced by the worship of the female principle of Śakti. The Saddharma Puṇḍarīka has a whole chapter on Dhāraṇis, or invocations to a female deity or power; demi-goddesses are also mentioned as protectors of the Sūtra and its readers. Chinese translations of the Dhāraṇis were begun at the beginning of the third century A.D. Thus Brāhmanism and Buddhism were equally influenced by this time-honoured form of worship, which seems to have been first systematised and co-ordinated in the Buddhist Mūla-Kalpa and the Guhya-samāja Tantras, the earliest Tāntrika texts, composed in the second and the third century A.D., according to Benoytosh Bhattacharya. The great Mahāyāna patriarch Asaṅga (fourth century A.D.), in his Prajñāpāramitā, echoed the basic notions of Śakti worship as a means of attaining the highest wisdom (prajñā, vidyā or śūnyatā), following the governing principle of the above Tāntrika text. His Mahāyāna-Sūtrālaṅkāra refers to certain sexual-religious exercises. According to different Buddhist traditions one or other of the patriarchs Asaṅga or Nāgārjuna is said to have been the earliest exponent of Buddhist Tāntrikism, having derived it from Maitreya of the Tuṣita-heaven and the Buddha Vairochana respectively.

The Popularity of Śakti Worship in the Gupta Age

The Gupta age, with its clarifiying and synthesising activity, had a profound influence upon the development of Tāntrikism. The Purāṇas reveal within the Brāhmanical fold a proliferation not merely of gods but also of goddesses, on the basis of the ancient cosmogonic differentiation of the Absolute into the sexes—Puruṣa and Prakṛiti, Brahman and Māyā-Śakti. The Gupta age managed to reconcile and synthesise the Purāṇas and Tantras by making the sexual dichotomy of Puruṣa and Prakṛiti of the Sāṅkhya philosophical system, and of Brahman and Māyā of the Vedānta, the basis of Tāntrikism; Śiva and Śakti having the same role or function as Puruṣa and Prakṛiti.

In ancient Brāhmanical thought Prakṛiti or Māyā is Becoming—the dynamism of the Supreme Being, Brahman or Puruṣa. Thus

all the gods of the world surrender to the Primordial Feminine—Śakti or Devī. For the salvation of the universe even Śiva, in the Kālikā Purāṇa, is urged by Brahmā to take a wife. In Kālidāsa's invocation at the beginning of the Raghuvaṃśaṃ, we find the inseparableness of the creators of the Universe, of Śiva and Pārvatī, and of the unity in duality, the fundamental notion of Tāntrika culture; Śakti, like Brahman, reconciles opposite categories. In the Bhagavadgītā there is also the conception of the Supreme Being as the Seed-Bearer and Prakṛiti as the genetrix of the Universe.

Throughout the Gupta epoch Durgā obtained popular worship under such different names such as Ambikā, Mahiṣāsuramardinī, Kātyāyanī, Pārvatī, Gaurī, Bhavānī, Bhagavatī, or simply Devī. One of the Gupta inscriptions (No. 17) alludes to the construction of a temple for the worship of the Divine Mothers (mātṛis): 'a very terrible abode, full of Ḍākinīs or ghosts, who utter loud and tremendous shouts in joy and stir up the very ocean with the mighty winds rising from the performance of Tāntrika rites'. From the fourth century onwards Tāntrika worship, with the accompanying development of the Bhairava and Bhairavī cults, became widespread in Northern India as is evident from references in Hiuen Tsang, Bhavabhūti and Bāṇa, although art and inconography still show the dominance of orthodox traditions until we reach the later Gupta and the Pāla and Sena periods, even in Bengal, the homeland of Śakti worship. Hiuen-Tsang, incidentally, had a very narrow escape from being immolated before an image of Durgā during his travels in the Gaṅgā valley.

The Devī Purāṇa, composed, according to R. C. Hazra, about the end of the seventh or the beginning of the eighth century A.D., is the Bible of Brāhmanical Śaktism, with its Durgā Saptaśatī or Chaṇḍī section, which is most sacred to the worshippers of the Goddess. The Devī Purāṇa mentions Tantras and Āgamas frequently and also the Pāṣaṇḍa (i.e. Tāntrika) Buddhas, who worship the Divine Mothers in their own ways. It distinguishes between right-hand and left-hand worshippers. The latter were to be found in Rāḍha and Varendra (in Bengal), Kāmarūpa and Kāmākhyā (in Assam), Bhoṭṭadeśa (Tibet), etc.; some of the places it mentions suggest that the Purāṇa was written in Bengal. It is noteworthy that this Purāṇa permits the Pukvasas, Chāṇḍālas and other outcaste groups to perform the rituals and sacrifies connected with the goddess, and even prefers for her worship a virtuous Śūdra to a worthless member of one of the higher castes. This agrees with the statement in the Harivaṃśa, an appendix

to the Mahābhārata, that Durgā was worshipped by such aboriginal peoples as the Śabaras, Barbaras and Pulindas, who were addicted to meat and wine. The Kādambarī, too, states that she was worshipped by the Śabaras; while the Prākṛit work, Gauḍavaho, of the eighth century A.D. also mentions the goddess Parṇa-śabarī, whom the Śabaras of the Vindhyas propitiated. Images of Pārvatī as Śabara-kanyā, with a head dress formed of leaves or with a tiger skin wrapped round her waist and belonging to the post-Gupta period, have been found in Gujarat. The worship of married women and virgin girls as manifestations of the Devī and the use of wine and meat are prescribed in the Devī Purāṇa for certain occasions.

The Tāntrika mode of worship was soon adopted by the different religious sects of Hinduism. We thus have Tāntrikism for at least five Hindu sects, Śaiva Tāntrikism, Śākta Tāntrikism, Vaiṣṇava Tāntrikism, Saura Tāntrikism and Gāṇapatya Tāntrikism, all affected equally by the Vedānta, as it was shaped by Śaṅkarāchārya with his emphasis on the Absolute as eternal Truth-Consciousness-Bliss, and by Tāntrika psycho-physical disciplines, formulae and diagrams. The whole Tāntrika procedure of mantra, yantra, chakra, nyāsa, mudrā, initiation, bhūtaśuddhi and consecration of images was gradually introduced into the various Brāhmanical cults, including Pāñcharātra Vaiṣṇavism and Āgamic Śaivism.

Śaktis in the Buddhist Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna

In the realm of Buddhist thought the worship of Śakti apparently had a definite beginning with the development of the Mahāyāna. Tāranāth specifically mentions that the Tantras and Tāntrika, being esoteric and secret, were as old as the time of the Mahāyāna Buddhist patriarch Nāgārjuna. Hiuen-Tsang referred to the worship of such Mahāyāna female deities as Tārā and Hārīti in the Nālandāvihāra. But images of other Mahāyāna female deities belonging to the same period, such as Prajñāpāramitā, Vasudhārā and Vāgīśvarī, have also been discovered at Nālandā; while at Sarnath early images of the goddess Tārā, both seated and standing, Mārīchī, Vasudhārā and Sarasvatī have been found; a remarkably graceful figure of the four-headed Tārā, with elaborately carved jewellery, being especially noteworthy. The worship of Tārā and Prajñāpāramitā was associated with the rise of a new cult within the bosom of Mahāyāna Buddhism, the Vajrayāna, which arose in the following manner. According to

the Guhya Samāja Tantra (second–third century A.D.), the Buddha transformed himself into five Dhyānī Buddhas (Buddhas in meditation), each with a Śakti, Prajñā or Vidyā. Thus there are Akṣobhya with Lochanā, Vairochana with Tārā, Ratnaketu with Māmakī, Amitābha with Pāṇḍarā, and Amoghavajra with Āryatārā. This Buddhist Tantra prescribes the method of meditating on each of the conjoint Dhyānī-Buddha-Śaktis, with specific mantras, mudrās, maṇḍalas and so on to enable the void, or śūnya to be reached, in which the phenomenal world, all objects of enjoyment, and enjoyment itself completely disappear. The śūnya is called Vajra because it is firm, impenetrable, indivisible, and imperishable, like the thunderbolt. Hence the new dispensation came to be called the Vajrayāna. Śūnya (void) and karuṇā (compassion) comprise Bodhichitta, or elevated consciousness. Their commingling or unity in duality (advaya) is symbolised by the mutual embrace of the yuganaddha, or yab-yum posture of the Vajrayāna deities, Heruka and Prajñā.

Now the void of the Vajrayāna, differing as it did from that of the Mādhyamika and Yogāchāra schools in the inclusion of the three elements, void, consciousness and bliss (śūnya, vijñāna and mahāsukha), made the rapprochment with Hinduism easy, the ground having been already prepared by the religious eclecticism and synthesis of the Gupta and post-Gupta ages.

The Tāntrika Renaissance under The Pālas

In the seventh and eighth centuries there was Buddhist renaissance of culture and art in Eastern India, during the long reigns of Dharmapāla (770–810) and Devapāla (810–850). These centuries saw the introduction of the following new female deities at Nālandā: Aparājitā, Vajra-Śāradā, Varttālī, Vadālī, Varālī, Varāhamukhī, Tārā and Parṇaśabarī. The Tāntrika male deities of the time included Vajrapāṇi, Mañjuvara or Mañjuśri, Yamāntaka, Trailokyavijaya, Heruka, Jambhala and Mārīchī. In these centuries the impulsion of Vajrayāna Tāntrikism from the Buddhist monasteries and other schools of learning reached Tibet and completely revolutionised her culture and religion. The impulsion first came from Śāntarakṣita (A.D. 706-762), who was a great scholar from Bengal and the high priest of Nālandāvihāra. He was the author of the Tattva-saṅgraha. This book exists both in Sanskrit and Tibetan

and shows his profound learning and discrimination in the discussion of both Hindu and Buddhist philosophical systems. He was also the author of several important Vajrayāna works. He was invited by King Khri-srong-lde-btsan to visit Tibet, where he stayed for thirteen years and built the first regular monastery, at Bsam-ya, after the model of the famous Odantapurī-vihāra. He and his disciples Kamalaśīla and Padmasambhava translated several Buddhist works into Tibetan. Śāntarakṣita left behind a succession of spiritual leaders and disciples, who are listed as follows in Cordier's Tangyur Catalogue: Padmasambhava or Padmavajra, Anaṅgavajra, Indrabhūti, Lakṣmiṃkarā, Līlāvajra, Dārika, Sahajayoginī Chintā and Dombī Heruka. Many of these teachers of Vajra and Sahaja, who laid the foundations of Buddhist Tāntrikism in Tibet, belonged to Bengal; their lives covered the latter part of the seventh and the whole of the eighth century. From this period began a close spiritual and cultural intimacy between Bengal, Assam, Nepal and Tibet which lasted till the close of the twelfth century.

The second half of the tenth century, when the Chandras were ruling in Eastern Bengal, and the eleventh and twelfth centuries saw the virtual conquest of the Mahāyāna by the Vajrayāna, with a vogue for the worship of the myriad forms of Lokanātha or Siṁhanāda Lokeśvara, Heruka and Jambhala and Tārā (Śyāmā or Khadiravaṇī, Vajra and Bhṛikuṭī), Ekajaṭā, Mārichī (Aśokakāntā), Prajñāpāramitā, Vāgīśvarī, Chuṇḍā, Uṣṇīṣavijayā, Mahāpratisārā, Parṇaśavarī, Hāritī, and other Śaktis. The great Buddhist monasteries of Bengal, Odantapurī, Somapura and Vikramaśīla, with their connections with Nepal and Tibet, reflected in their production and teaching of Tāntrika Texts and their worship of Tāntrika deities the change over to the esoteric cult.

The Rise of Sahaja and the Exit of Buddhism

We now enter upon the most interesting, though confused and obscure, phase of religious development, represented by the fusion of Vajrayāna and Sahajayāna, without which the disappearance of Buddhism from India cannot be understood. The evolution of Vajrayāna meant so far as Buddhism was concerned a preference for mysticism and esoterism, rather than the metaphysical theories of the Mahāyāna Sarvāstivāda, Yogāchāra, Mādhyamika and other schools, and the integration of various Tāntrika yoga methods.

The next stage of development saw a shift of emphasis from the Vajrayāna worship of deities and ceremonialism to easy, 'spontaneous' (sahaja) yogic contemplation, and the interpretation of Vajra, mudrā, mantra, maṇḍala and other externals of religion from the viewpoint of inner yogic experience. This marked the complete triumph of Tāntrikism, which was called Hindu or Buddhist according to convenience and assumed the generic name of Sahaja-siddhi; for both Buddhist Mahāyāna or Vajrayāna and Hindu Tāntrika deities faded away on the plane of consciousness of the absolute void (nairātma, śūnya) and bliss (mahāsukha).

Also associated with this phase was a stressing of the subtle and elaborate psycho-physical discipline of Haṭhayoga, along with a complete denial of worship, ritualism and asceticism, grounded on the externalisation of the unconscious as the Eternal, Transcendental Woman, the expression of supreme bliss, void and transcendence in the Sahajayāna. Corresponding to the definition of the Vajra the Vajrayāna teacher and Siddhāchārya, Nādapāda or Nāropā, who described it as the highest stage of the worshipper who wears the Vajra loin-cloth and is seated in the Vajra posture, we have in Gorakṣanātha an identical description of the contemplative, with his Vajrakachchhoṭa and Vajra-āsana, achieving immortality through haṭha-yoga.

As the new dispensation, emphasising ease, spirituality and freedom, spread far and wide in Northern India, obliterating the differences between the last phases of Buddhism and Śaiva, Śākta and Vaiṣṇava worship, Buddhism made its exit or lost its independent existence. The elusiveness, flexibility and syncretic trend of Tāntrikism were responsible for the dramatic metamorphosis of Buddhist theories and cults and their complete absorption by Nātha and Sahaja yoga.

The Absorption of the Vajrayāna by Siddha Nāthism and Sahaja

Thus in a sense Nātha-Siddha and Sahaja were the direct heirs of Buddhism in the very area of its origin fifteen centuries afterwards. The Nātha-Siddhas, half-Buddhist and half-Hindu but whole yogis, all flourished between the tenth and twelfth centuries A.D. Many of them were apotheosised and worshipped in the temples of Bengal, Nepal and Tibet. The most famous of them were Mīnanātha (Mat-

syendra, Lui-pā or Lui-pāda) and Gorakṣanātha. The former is regarded as the Ādi Siddha, the founder of Haṭha yoga and Sahajayāna Siddhi, and is sometimes identified with Avalokiteśvara of Buddhism and with Śiva of Hinduism. In Bengali legend he is Matsyendranātha, and in Hindu and Punjabi legend he is Machchhandra; homage is paid to Machchhanda Vibhu in the Tantrāloka of Abhinava-Gupta of Kāśmira. He lived in the second half of the tenth century, and is still worshipped in Western Bengal and Mymensingh. The kernel of his religious teaching is contained in the following quotation: 'Of what consequence are all the processes of meditation? In spite of them you have to die in weal and woe. Take leave of all the elaborate practices of yogic control (bandha) and the false hope of deceptive, supernatural gifts, and accept this side of śūnyatā as your own'.

Gorakṣanātha or Gorakhanātha, who seems to have flourished in the tenth century A.D., was the disciple of Matsyendranātha, and even more celebrated. To him are ascribed the Gorakṣa-saṃhitā and Gorakṣa-siddhānta. He rose to the highest spiritual eminence. A medley of legends from various parts of India, including Nepal, Tibet, Mahārāṣṭra, Gujarat and the Punjab, not only seek to prove his divinity but place him above Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Devī. Such is India's homage to a Siddha yogi. The Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa gives a docetic account of him. According to various traditions Kabīra, Nānaka and Pipa obtained religious instruction from him; while Dādū and his disciple Rajjab refer to him with due reverence, along with the doctrine of the Siddhas. Gorakṣanātha is one of the forgotten teachers of India, and yet his influence on Indian religious life through his spreading of the Haṭha yoga and Sahajayāna yoga from Kāmarūpa to the Punjab and from Tibet to Mahārāṣṭra was as profound as that of Śaṅkara and Rāmānanda. He represents the continuity of the doctrines and practices of the ancient Ājīvikas, the Śaivites and the Vajrayāna Buddhists; and he had a Buddhist name, Anaṅga-vajra or Ramaṇa-vajra. He is still the principal deity of the Gorkha people. The following may be said to give his main teaching: 'Om, sit in the lotus posture. Then concentrate on breath. Obliterate the mind; lock it. The light will appear at the zenith. Its first entrance is through the left door (nostril). The vital air will then play in all the sixty-four joints. Lock the nine doors; the light will appear in the tenth. The yogī should act on such a serpent as will soak the earth (yogic power in the lowest plexus) and fill the sky. Draw out the tune from the air in the sky. Bring the water of the earth to the sky.

Understand the contrivance of that yogī who, by joining the mind to breath, evokes supra-consciousness. Saith Gorakha, if by regulating mind and air one brings about Unmanā, then the body will resound (with the unstruck music)'.

The diffusion of the Nātha-Siddha movement throughout India brought about a final consummation of the marriage between Buddhism and Hinduism. Due to monachism and its acceptance of the general postulates of Brāhmanism, Buddhism had markedly declined in influence, with no striking original philosophical genius among its adherents and a reduction in the number of Buddhist monasteries in the country, many being destroyed. Not only did Buddhism completely lose its leadership and morale, but the development of the more comprehensive, syncretic Tāntrika mysticism swept away the lingering remains of Buddhism as a separate Vajrayāna cult.

The Female Principle and Reality in Different Schools of Yoga

The Yogāchāra void now became the goddess Nairātmā, Prajñā or Avadhūtī, or Avadhūtikā, uniting herself with the Bodhichitta or the Vajrasattva. Emphasis shifted completely towards Haṭha-yogic bliss, Kāyā-Sādhana and the awakening of the Female Principle within the body (Jung's Anima), which had different names in the different schools of worship: Prajñā, Nairātmā, Nairāmaṇi or Śūnyatā in the Buddhist Vajrayāna; Dombī, Chāṇḍālī, Rajakī and Naṭī in Sahaja; Śabarī and Avadhūtikā in Nāthism; and Yoginī and Kula-Kuṇḍalinī Śakti in Hindu Tāntrikism. These females are not damsels of flesh and blood, but Animas or Eternal Feminines, Jñānamudrās. The adoption of the names of outcast females symbolises in a new metaphor the ancient 'Asparśa yoga', which transcends both sense perception and the scriptural knowledge of the Brāhmaṇas. In the phraseology of yoga these damsels are nāḍīs (Iḍā, Piṅgalā and Suṣumṇā, or Lalanā, Rasanā and Avadhūtī), or arteries, and mudrās, or finger gestures, to induce meditation. The Sampuṭikā actually asserts in modern psycho-analytic fashion that the supreme eternal and immutable yoga springs from sexuality, that sex is part and parcel of human nature and cannot be denied or repressed; 'it is therefore wise to transform the sexual impulse in the yogic procedure for the realisation of reality' (MS. quoted by Shashibhusan Dasgupta).

Buddhist Tāntrika literature classifies the male-female union of

opposites, i.e., mind (bodhichitta or vajra) and matrix (ālaya or karuṇā), according to four phases: biological and behavioural (karma-mudrā), emotional and aesthetic (jñāna-mudrā), abstract and universal (mahāmudrā), and non-relational or transcendental (samayamudrā or phalamudrā). The Primal Feminine, or the irrepressible femininity in man's nature (in the sense of Jung), is called mudrā because she represents the true seal or mark (mudrā) of pure consciousness or void. Mudrā also means joy (mudaṃ and ratiṃ), which rises from level to level of relationship and experience until non-mindedness (Śūnyatā) or void is reached. For the enlightened mind she is the integral Great Bliss (mahāsukhaikarūpā), wisdom (prajñā), and void (Śūnyatā) in one. 'Her essence is non-being. She is free from the veils which cover cognisable objects and so on. She shines forth like the serene sky at noon during autumn. She is the support of all success. She is the identity of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa. Her body is compassion (Karuṇā), which is not restricted to a single object'. Thus observes Adayavajra in his Sekodeṣṭīkā (translation by Guenther).

The Sahaja Succession: from Gorakhanātha and Saraha to the Bāūls and Sahajīyas

The Sahaja-Siddhi and Nāthism, emphasising the practice of yoga and reinterpreting from the viewpoint of mystical insight and power the feminine symbolism of the Vajrayāna, became popular cults throughout Northern India, spreading from their origin in Bengal and Assam. As many as eighty-four Siddhas and nine Nāthas are mentioned by various legends from Bengal, the U.P., and Mahārāṣṭra. The Bengali 'Songs of Raja Govindachandra', probably composed in the first half of the eleventh century, speak of a most accomplished Siddha, Mayanāmati, the mother of Raja Govindchandra, who was initiated 'into the mystic knowedge of Mahājñāna by the sage Gorakṣa-nātha, whom she met with sixteen hundred disciples'. In a Hindi version of the legend she is the daughter of Gandharvasen of Dhārānagari. In Bengal she has been deified and is worshipped in temples, especially in the Northern districts, while in Tibet she is considered as a Tāntrika Dākinī or demi-goddess.

Gorakhanātha, like the Buddha, chose the Middle Way (madhya mārga). He rejected at once the excesses and immoralities of Hindu and Buddhist Tāntrikism, the metaphysical abstraction of Hindu

and Buddhist absolute idealism, and the exaggerated claims of the psycho-physical yoga practices that were common to all schools. His maxim was, 'Eating a square meal is death. Not eating at all is also death. Day and night meditate on the fire of Brahman. Abstain from both forced bodily exercise and idleness. Saith Gorakha, O son: temperance alone will enable thee to cross the ocean'. Or, again, he stresses that mere reading is futile; to reach the other shore it should be backed up by reflection on the essence of the scripture. The transcendental knowledge Gorakh describes as a tree without seed, leaf or flower, and yet yielding fruit. It is the offspring of the barren woman. It is the moon where there is no sky and the sun where there is no universe. The Sahaja, or the natural and spontaneous way of living, is the highest according to Gorakha. This sahaja, according to him, is produced from the void (sahaja-śūnya) and is both firm and flexible, beyond any description or reference. A supreme adept in yoga, Gorakhanātha enjoined compassion for all creatures, identifying jīva with Śiva. He condemned the use of animal food and any kind of violence to sentient creatures, since they are one's own kith and kin (haṃsa-gotan, potan). In a fine metaphorical passage Gorakhanātha describes the true householder as one who can go out and enter the microcosm at his sweet will, destroy all illusion and experience the identity consciousness. His body becomes the temple of nirañjana. Yet at the same time he continually stresses that spiritual illumination is far more important than yogic practices of posture and breath control. 'Without the inner spirit the breath and the postures prove stumbling blocks in the spiritual path, and the aspirant can go no further than the first stage'.

The earliest of the many poets of the mystical movement was Saraha (-pā) Siddhāchārya, who is sometimes placed before A.D. 750, as a contemporary of Dharmapāla of Bengal, and even regarded as the Ādi-Siddha or founder of Siddha Nāthism. The Tibetan Tanjur (Bstan-ḥgyur) credits him with twenty-five Tāntrika works, including more than half a dozen concerned with Dohākoṣa-gīti and Charyā-gīti. According to tradition he was born in Rājnī in in Eastern India, was initiated into Tāntrika Buddhism by a king of Orissa, and held a chair at Nālandā, where he in turn initiated Nāgārjuna into a system of mysticism and alchemy. Between A.D. 950 and 1200 a whole galaxy of poet-mystics flourished in Bengal, Kāmarūpa, Nepal, Tibet, and Uḍḍiyāna. They are among the eighty-four siddhas who are worshipped as Mahāyāna patriarchs in Nepal and Tibet and as Śaiva saints in India. Their products, the Charyā-

padas or esoteric hymns, represent the fountain head of Bengali literature and are mostly preserved in Tibetan translations and Bengali dohās. The medieval dialect in which they were composed has been variously labelled by philologists as 'old' Bengali, Assamese (Kāmarūpī), Oriya, and Maithilī. It would be more appropriate, however, to call it Gauḍīya; in the eleventh century Al-beruni speaks of the Eastern script as the Gauḍa alphabet in vogue in the eastern country.

One of the great Sahaja teachers was Indrabhūti (about A.D. 687–717), King of Uddīyāna and author of the Jñāna-siddhi and several other Sanskrit texts connected with the rise of the Sahajayāna. He had a most distinguished daughter, Lakṣmīṅkarā Devī, who in her Advayasiddhi formulated a highly novel creed denying asceticism, ritualism and worship and stressing meditation on the human body, in which all the gods are to be found. This originated the Sahajīya cult in Bengal, which is still a living force. Another woman, the prominent Tantra authoress, Sahajayoginī Chintā, may also have been connected with the rise of the Sahajīya cult in Bengal.

The adoption of the Buddhist Sahajayāna as the common legacy of the mystical schools and sects of northern India marked its complete assimilation into Brāhmanical Tāntrikism, the cult of the common people. The Sahajayāna, or the easy pilgrimage, was taken over from Buddhist and Hindu Tāntrikism into early Vaiṣṇavism and the Sahajīya literature of Bengal. But though the medieval mystics and Santa poets of northern India inherited the tradition, now and then the theistic strain became too strong, whereupon the incomprehensible nature of Sahaja would be identified with the Lord (Svāmī), Rama, or Kṛiṣṇa. Traces of the now forgotten Buddhist Sahajayāna still linger outside the pale of orthodox Hinduism in the lives and spiritual discipline of the Bāūls, Nāthas, Kānphaṭās (Śaiva), Avadhūtas, and Sahajīyas of Bengal.

The Realisation of the Transcendental Sahaja

The aim of Man, according to the Sahajayāna, is to achieve ease and spontaneity in spiritual as well as earthly life. He has to enjoy the objects of the senses with perfect purity and freedom, without effort and repression, realising these, as Sahaja, in nature. In the ocean of existence, Sahaja is like the mast on the drifting ship, to which the mind must return after wandering hither and thither. 'The

crow', says Dādū, 'sat on the mast and took its journey in the ocean; it hovered round and round and got tired, and then sat still on the mast of the ship'. This is reminiscent of Saraha Siddha's verse: 'He who does not delight in the purity of the sensuous world but is concerned only with the void is like a pilot crow, which must return to the boat however high up into the sky it may fly'.

For theistic cults too, the common background of Tāntrika yoga, symbolism and ritual transformed ordinary sense enjoyment into a higher and more profound spiritual satisfaction. The Hindu Kulārṇava Tantra has the following passage on the consecration of the senses and desires: 'The Great God has ordained in the doctrine for adepts that spiritual advancement must be achieved by means of those very things which are the causes of man's downfall. He who withdraws the senses from their objects and unites them with Ātman is a true meal-eater, others are mere slaughterers of animals. The Śakti of a paśu (animal man) is asleep, that of a Kaula (divine man) is awake. He who enjoys this śakti is an enjoyer of Śakti. He who enjoys the bliss arising from the union of Parāśakti with Ātman has true sexual love, others are mere enjoyers of women. He who partakes of the five categories of sense objects, knowing their true significance is liberated'.

Dādū, the celebrated medieval mystic, speaks thus of Śūni-Sahaja, in which the void or the sky (gagana) is associated with profound bliss and immortality: 'Bereft of duality is Sahaja, there joy and sorrow become one; that Sahaja neither dies nor lives, it is the state of complete Nirvāṇa. . . . Hold your mind in the Sahaja vacuity amidst all duality, and by attaining the final state of arrest drink nectar; and then there is no fear of Kāla (Time or Death)'. 'And so', the mystic sings, 'the eye is feasted with colour, the ear with music, the palate with flowers wondrously provided. And we find that the body longs for the Spirit, the Spirit for the body; the flower for the scent, the scent for the flower; the words for Truth, the Truth for words; the form for ideal, the ideal for form; and all this mutual worship is but the worship of the ineffable underlying Reality, by whose presence every one of them is glorified. And Dādū struggles not, but simply keeps his heart open to this shower of love, and thus rejoices in perpetual springtime'.

Kabīr too, has a fine description of Sahaja Samādhi:—

'O Sādhu, the sahaja union is the best:

'Wherever I go, I circumambulate around Him, all I do is His service;

When I lie down (to sleep), I do obeisance to Him; I worship no other deity.
Whatever I utter, that becomes His name; whatever I hear becomes His remembrance; my eating and drinking constitute His worship.
The cloister and the hearth are one to me, all duality having been resolved.
I shut not my eyes, I close not my ears, I mortify my body not at all.
With open eyes I behold His beauteous form and recognise Him and smile.
My mind has united with the eternal Word. It has abandoned low passions.
Standing or sitting, never is the harmony disturbed.
Saith Kabir, this is the supra-conscious life that I have here expatiated upon:
There is an ultimate sphere beyond pain and pleasure; therein am I merged'.

Sahaja Love-mysticism in Medieval Bengali Poetry

The Sahaja cult constituted a system of practical sexual discipline and control and romantic adoration of woman, rooted in the divinisation of human affections. It is inconsistent with marriage in so far as the latter's social obligations block the easy, spontaneous flow of the couple's sexual and aesthetic intimacies, insights and delights. It is equally free from the pressure of repressed impulses and the resulting physical tension and strain. The serene, passionless intimacy of Sahaja is a beyond-physical experience—thus did Kanu Bhatt sing of Sahaja love in Bengal in the tenth century. But the most accomplished poet of Sahaja was Chaṇḍīdāsa, one of the founders of Bengali poetry, who lived in the fourteenth century. His love for the outcast washerwoman, Rāmī (who stands for the Eternal Damsel Rajakī of Sahaja worship), was that of Dante for Beatrice. Chaṇḍīdāsa sings: 'I have taken refuge at your feet, my beloved. When I do not see you my mind has no rest. You are to me as a parent to a helpless child. You are the goddess herself—the garland about my neck—my very universe. All is darkness without you; you are the meaning of my prayers. I cannot forget your grace and your charm—and yet there is no desire in my heart'. The lapses into purely human

passion and surrender are not disregarded. Sahaja is as far removed from the physical as from the spiritual allegory. 'Hear me!' says the poet, 'To attain salvation through the love of woman, make your body like a dry stick; for He that pervades the universe seen of none, can only be found by one who knows the secret of love'.

Neither man nor woman must yield to passion nor yet suppress passion, in order that an unsought, unperturbed serenity in moments of greatest intimacy can open the door to the highest spiritual experience. For this there should be no missing of planes. The highest flights of love can be reached only between equals who are purged of both desire and inhibition. Man and woman must belong to the same spiritual plane. 'The woman must cast herself into the sea of social obloquy, and yet she must never actually drink of forbidden waters. She should find true love in the slow consuming fire that turns pleasures and pains into ashes. The man must be able to make a frog dance in the mouth of the snake, to wreathe the peak of Sumeru with thread or to bind an elephant in the spider's web'. Such is the destiny of mystical love, which surpasses human relations and family duties and is eternal, 'having existed when the earth was not born nor days and nights appeared'.

Sahaja Erotic Symbolism in Medieval Sculpture

The Sahaja way of the mystics and religionists profoundly influenced the ideal of continence, love and marriage in India. In Indian thought love-making is ritual; sex leads up to the liberation of sex. In fact there are as many postures of erotic enjoyment as there are of yogic contemplation. These are described in Vātsyāyana's Kāmasūtra, and many of them are sculptured at Khajurāho, Koṇāraka and Bhuvaneśvara. The carving of erotic images or of Mithuna couples was due to the impact of Vajra and Sahaja symbolism on medieval Brāhmanical art and ritual. There is neither carnality in love nor yet squeamishness about sex in the Tāntrika sculptures. They show men and women in an infinite variety of embraces, which symbolise the spiritual ecstasy of the soul merging with the Divine. A calculated eroticism is often revealed by marked contrasts between the roundness and softness of the breasts and belly and the straightness and angularity of the arms and legs, or between the litheness and extreme delicacy of the limbs and gestures and the heaviness of the coiffures and jewellery. At Koṇāraka worship of the sun as the

universal fecundating energy seems to have joined hands with the Vajra and Sahaja cults in the depiction of a great variety of mithunas embodying a perfect harmony of plastic form and delicacy of amorous feeling. Each mithuna at Khajurāho and Koṇāraka is a masterpiece enshrining a separate episode or accent of human love in which the couples, in spite of their sinuous movements and provocative display of flesh, melt together into an elemental wholeness which, rather than separation, is the meaning of existence according to the Vajra and Sahaja schools of thought. The metaphysical significance of the mithuna is also evident in the construction of the temple. While all its sculptural decorations irresistibly point to unification, the temple itself is built like Meru, the mystical mountain that divides heaven and earth, or like the body of the primordial cosmic Purusha, who divides himself into the polarity of the phenomenal and the real.

All worship is intended to re-establish the pristine wholeness, of which the great type and symbol is the mithuna in India. The Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad observed centuries earlier: 'A man embraced by a beloved woman knows nothing more of a within or without'. The mithuna stands for the identification of Ātman and Brahman. The passage may be compared with one from Asaṅga's Mahāyāna-sūtrālaṅkāra, which has been diversely interpreted by Sylvain Lévi and Winternitz: 'In the parāvṛitti of sexual congress supreme greatness is obtained, viz., the enjoyment of Buddha happiness and looking without impure thoughts at one's wife'.

In their religious aspects the Vajra and Sahaja movements also spread to Further India and the Indian Archipelago, along with Tāntrikism. But in South-eastern art we find Śrī-yantras, symbolising the dynamism of the opposite principles, Śiva-Śakti, rather than sculptured Umāliṅganas and mithunas. As late as the fifteenth century A.D. one of the inscriptions (A.D. 1492) collected by Forchhammer from Pagan, Pinya and Ava in Upper Burma mentions the gift of 295 texts, along with a monastery, land and slaves, to the Buddhist order by a Governor and his wife. These include not only texts derived from Sanskrit sources on logic, alaṅkāra, astrology, astronomy and war, but also Vajrayāna and Siddha-nātha texts, viz., Mṛityuvañchanā, Mahākālāchalikā and Mahākālachakkatikā. The first of these belongs to the school of Matsyendranātha, the founder of Haṭha-yoga and Nāthism, which finally brought about the complete absorption of the later forms and practices of Buddhism by the more ancient religion of the land. The conquest of Time (mahākāla) and Death, or liberation in the flesh, through the per-

fection of the physical body (Siddhadeha) is regarded as the culmination of Haṭha yoga in Siddha Nāthism.

The Cycle of Mystical Evolution

It may be appropriate to indicate here the broad phases, or rather cycles, through which religions pass in India. First, a new religious development is grounded on metaphysical reorientation; metaphysics in India representing not merely knowledge but also, and above all, a way to salvation, moksha and nirvāṇa. Second, there is a shift from metaphysics, as soon as it crystallises into dogma, to ineffable, mystical experience, from worship and ritual to yoga, the gate through which the Indian enters the cosmic whole. The practical, utilitarian Ṛig-vedic worship of nature divinities with elaborate and bloody rituals gave place to the mysticism of the Upaniṣads and the identification of Self with the Absolute or Whole. The teaching of the Buddha and Mahāvīra was a continuation of the Upaniṣadic revolt against dogma and ceremonial and of the stressing of an integral, mystical consciousness and the collectivity of all sentient beings. The simple creed of Hīnayāna Buddhism largely confined itself to a code of self-discipline and compassion, and certain external aspects of religion, without soaring into those heights of religious experience inaccessible to the average man. The Mahāyāna, influenced both by the traditional mysticism of Hinduism and Taoism, constituted a marked departure from the Hīnayāna, rooted as it was in ecstatic contemplation and Bhakti on the one hand and the ecstatic feeling of the immanence of the divine in every sentient creature on the other. The note of worship and mysticism in the Mahāyāna fitted Buddhism for world conquest. The identification of the Bodhisattva with Lokeśvara, Lokanātha or Śiva in India, and with Kuan-yin, the feminine counterpart of Avalokiteśvara, in China, and the rise of Śakti worship within the bosom of the Mahāyāna represented another shift from traditional dogma to symbols of mystical inspiration.

The Māhāyana not only replaced the historical by the metaphysical Buddha but also built its theology and modes of mystical contemplation on the conception of Śaktis for the various categories of Buddha and Bodhisattva. This again paved the way for the development of the Vajrayāna. The apprehension of the ultimate in the Vajrayāna is not only called Śūnyatā, or Void, but also Karuṇā, or Compassion. Bliss, or Mahāsukha, is an ever-renewed experience, and man gains

infinite wisdom and activity. Thus Compassion becomes dynamic. Enlightenment associated with infinite Compassion towards all beings is the Vajra, i.e., the integrity and immutability of the whole, comparable to a diamond. This mystical experience of wholeness, which is the same thing as Void, is couched in terms of bi-sexuality, the masculine aspect (Upāya) being all-pervasive compassion or Karuṇā, and the feminine aspect (Prajñā) is the Void, or Śūnyatā. 'When the mind (Chittaṃ) that is not distinct from the Void and Compassion together is realised, then is the teaching of the Buddha, the Dharma and the Saṅgha realised'.

The next phase saw the fusion of Vajrayāna and Nāthism; and with it the complete triumph of Tāntrikism, which was either Hindu or Buddhist, Śaiva or Vajra, according to the social context. It may be noted, however, that whereas Śaiva Tāntrikism interprets pure consciousness or void (Śiva) as masculine and the dynamism of reality (Śakti) as feminine, Buddhist Tāntrikism conceives the void as feminine and the dynamism as masculine; a disparity that may have been determined by grammatical gender.

From Worship and Yoga to Sahaja and Karuṇā

The starting point of Tāntrika worship and yoga in the later phases of Buddhism is thus represented by the realisation of the Bodhichitta or the Vajrasattva in the form of a unity of the feminine and masculine principles of Karuṇā and Vajra or Prajñā and Upāya. Compassion to all sentient creatures becomes the *sine qua non* of Wisdom (Prajñā), the Method (Upāya) by which the enlightened mind of man (Bodhichitta or Vajra) finds reality. Wisdom, Void and Compassion are all here considered as feminine, and Method as the masculine aspect of reality. 'When one realises that all phenomena represent the Void or non-being (Śūnyatā), one reaches the essence of wisdom (Prajñā). Since it affects all beings distressed by the floods of suffering that rise from various causes, compassion (Kṛipā) is sung of as love (Rāga)'.

What is here significant is that the Sahaja bliss, in which there is neither existence, nor non-existence, neither duality nor non-duality, leads to universal compassion. The non-dualism of the Vedānta leads to samabhāva and samarasa, or identity of consciousness and feeling. Mahāyāna absolute idealism too identifies nirvāṇa with universal unity and charity. The classic texts of Buddhist Tāntrikism,

beginning with the Śrī-guhya-samāja-tantra, assert the character of nescience (bodhichitta) to be the unity of Śūnyatā (void) and Karuṇā (compassion), and of Upāya (method) and Prajñā (wisdom), interpreting these as the masculine and feminine principles of consciousness and reality. Similarly Sahaja completely identifies vacuity, spontaneity or the ultimate nature of reality with Karuṇā, Advayavajra remarks: 'The oneness of the Void (Śūnyatā) and Compassion (kṛipā) is not an intellectual problem (but the verbalisation of an experience). The void and its manifestation are by nature coupled together (yuganaddha)'. The inseparableness of the Great Void (Śūnyatā) and the Great Compassion (Karuṇā) is enlightenment (Bodhichitta). Kambalāmbarapāda (Kāmali) 'fills his boat of Karuṇā with the gold of Śūnyatā or void'. Kānhupāda explains Sahaja Siddhi by the metaphor of a game of chess, Karuṇā constituting the board of play. Yoga culminates at once in Mahāsukha, or the Great Bliss, and Sarva-karuṇā, or Universal Compassion for the liberation of all fellow-creatures. The metaphysics of Sahaja is that the Great Bliss is passive, neutral, and that the phenomenal world is brought into play by the dynamic principle of Karuṇā, or Compassion, Upāya, or Method, which holds things in manifestation, just as it withholds the Bodhisattva from nirvāṇa and the Siddha from transcendental samādhi or bliss. The world process, then, is Karuṇā, which is also known as Śūnyatā and Sahaja, the vacuous and the ultimate (Śūnyatākaruṇā).

The final phase is accordingly represented by the eclipse and extinction of the Buddhist Mahāyāna or Vajrayāna and the Hindu Tāntrika deities on the plane of absolute void, bliss and compassion. Out of this arises the easy and spontaneous yoga of Sahaja, in which the wisdom and insight of meditation can be secured in the midst of the enjoyment of the senses and even in the tensest moments of sexual love and intimacy the supreme realisation of compassion. 'In every home one speaks of purity, but one does not know where the Great Bliss (mahāsukha) resides. Saraha declares that the world is fettered by the mind, and none comprehends the state of non-mindedness (achitta)'.

Romantic Expression in Tāntrika Art

Mystical experience, is integral and ineffable, encompassing both silence and activity, withdrawal and enjoyment. It is a matter at once

of individual growth, cultural education and racial temperament. It makes possible the contemplation of sex abstractly and symbolically as an episode in the descent of the divine to the earth and in the ascent of the earthly to the divine. In the Christian West the doctrine of original sin and the ecclesiastical detestation of man's body prevented the full integration of religion, art and sex. In the Tāntrika East there was a wholesome and healthy attitude towards sex and marriage, steering clear of both prudishness and lasciviousness in art, combined with a profound feeling for the beauty and mystery of the human body as a microcosm. The influence of the Tāntrika tradition, especially in its Sahaja phase, on Indian art is seen at its best in the composite Śiva-Umā images (Umāliṅgana-mūrti) of Eastern India during the late medieval period (about the eleventh and twelfth centuries A.D.), which reveal a marvellous blend of charm and power, of human sensibility and spiritual abstraction, of soft and tender fleshliness and stern discipline of outline and form.

We come across much earlier Umā-Sahita images at the doorway of the Deogarh temple in the Gupta period, and in far-off Indonesia, dated about the sixth century A.D. and bearing the impress of Pallava art. This motif became quite common, especially in Vaṅga, Kaliṅga, Central India and Rajputana, in the period of Tāntrika dominance, from the tenth to twelfth centuries. The medieval sculptures of Khajurāho, Vaṅga and Kaliṅga are more passionate than those of Ellora, Bādāmī and Elephanta, and yet they are flower-like in their poise and abstraction. We have the early medieval representations of the nuptials of Śiva and Pārvatī at Ellora and Elephanta, and the various Śiva-Umā couples, as well as the portrayal of their passionate conjugal embrace and māna, on the Kailāśa at Ellora. But the vitality, mystery and humanism of Tāntrika, and subsequently of Sahaja, worship give to Umāliṅgana images of the Pāla and Sena periods, and later to those of the tenth to twelfth centuries, a combination of the sweetness and delicacy of Botticelli and the joy and purity of Fra Angelico that we come across in hardly any other Indian sculpture. A typical specimen represents the Devī sitting on Śiva's left thigh. Her left hand holds a mirror, which reflects the universe of her own form, while her right hand rests on Śiva's right shoulder in affectionate embrace. Śiva also embraces the Devī, or tenderly touches her cheek. One of his hands holds a blue lotus, symbol of the unfolding universe. In Śaṅkara's 'Waves of Bliss', or the Saundarya-laharī, there is the well-known delineation

of Tripurā-Sundarī, or the Goddess as Beauty, sitting on the lap of Śiva, familiar to the Śāktas as an aid to yoga contemplation and samādhi. It hardly needs emphasising that in the later medieval period there was a great demand for Āliṅgana images for worship and meditation throughout Northern and Eastern India.

Throughout the land the dominating myth and ontology of Tāntrikism produced a romantic expressionist art exhibiting extraordinary grace, vigour and imagination. Its canons are embodied in the Sādhana-mālā and the Viṣṇudharmottaram, which prescribe the forms, attributes and poses of a hundred gods and goddesses, for contemplation, worship and artistic construction. Tāntrikism's dynamic conception of the ambivalent forces of creation and destruction, life and death, grace and grimness and its sense of the immanence of the divine in physical, sensual life bridged anew the chasm between enjoyment and renunciation, between Beauty and Truth. This is bewitchingly symbolised in Tāntrika art by the figure of the Celestial Beauty, Surāsundarī, Apsarā or Nāyikā, who often covers every niche, wall and corner in medieval temples, absorbed in her own charm and luminosity as she plays ball, touches her bosom, embellishes herself, or looks at her face in her mirror, in complete unconcern for the gods next to her, or for her worshippers. The frequent omission of eyeballs symbolises her introversion and self-transcendence. She is the omnipresent Śakti, the Mahāmāyā, the Enchantress of the Universe. 'She is both pleasure and wisdom, light and darkness'. 'Her body is both the tangibility of the world and the supersensuous, subtle material of the heavens and the hells'. She is the one quintessential Being that is both world illusion, which imprisons all creatures in the shackles of desire, and world-transcending illumination.

The Foreign Elements in Tāntrikism

Worship of the female principle has taken countless forms and names in India across the ages. While the origin of many remains obscure some can be traced to foreign sources. The entire Tāntrika literature can be divided into two broad categories: the orthodox, represented by the Āgamas, the Yāmalas (with their supplements), and the Samayāchāra; and the heterodox, represented by the Vajrayāna, the Sahajayāna, and the Kulāchāra; the latter being both Buddhist and Brāhmanical.

The Hevajra Tantra, an important Vajrayāna Tāntrika text dating from before the eighth century A.D., mentions in the following order four major pīṭhas, or seats, of Tāntrikism, all on the main routes to China and Tibet: Uḍḍiyāna (the Swat valley), Jālandhara (between Nepal and Kāśmīra), Pūrṇagiri (not clearly identified), and Kāma-rupa (the Brahmaputra valley). Now two of the principal exponents of the Vajrayāna were Indrabhūti, who was the King of Uḍḍiyāna, and Siddhāchārya Luipada, who was, according to Tibetan authorities, one of the king's teachers. At the beginning of the seventh century, moreover, Hiuen-Tsang noted that in the Swat valley the people used to make the acquisition of magical formulae their occupation; which obviously refers to Tāntrikism.

Bengal was also an early home of Tāntrikism, though here only orthodox varieties of Śakti image, such as Durgā, Mahiṣamardinī, Lakṣmī, Kātyāyanī, and Sarasvatī, can be met with until we come to the Pāla and Sena periods. There are, however, a plethora of Tārā images in various Vajrayāna forms, such as Mārichī, Parṇaśabarī, Chuṇḍā, Ekajaṭā, Sitātapatrā, Khadiravaṇī-Tārā, Vajra-Tārā, and Bhṛikuṭi Tārā, of the eleventh and twelfth centuries. The Aṣṭasāhas-rikā Prajñāpāramitā, which belongs to the eleventh century A.D., includes such Śaktis as Bhagavatī Tārā of Chandradvīpa, Buddh-ardhi Tārā and Chuṇḍā. It is noteworthy that during this period the worship of Hevajra, with his Śakti in yab-yum or mithuna posture was popular. Hevajra is an Indo-Tibetan Buddhist deity and his image has been found at such widely different places as Paharpur and Murshidabad in Bengal. The Hevajra Tantra teaches that 'Bliss (sukha) is the ultimate reality. It is Dharma-kāya, the metaphysical Buddha. It is the whole Universe. It is Prajñā. It is Upāya. It itself is the union. It is existence. It is non-existence. It is the Lord Vajrasattva'. According to Bagchi, Saroruha-vajra or Saroruha-Siddha, also called Padma-vajra, is known in the history of Buddhist Tāntrikism as the author of the Hevajra-sādhanā and one of the pioneers of Hevajra Tantra, and also as the Guru and Paramaguru respectively of Anaṅga-vajra and Indrabhūti of Uḍḍiyāna. The Hevajra cult, associated with the last phase of Buddhist Tāntrikism, still holds an important place in Tibet and was once widespread in Bengal.

The Rudra-yāmala (paṭala XVII) definitely mentions Mahāchina as one of the sacred regions that should be visited to obtain mahā-siddhi. That the Kubjikā Tantra is of foreign derivation is clear from the exhortation in one of its stanzas to 'Go to India'. Similarly the Tārā Tantra declares that the cult of Chīna-Tārā came from the country of

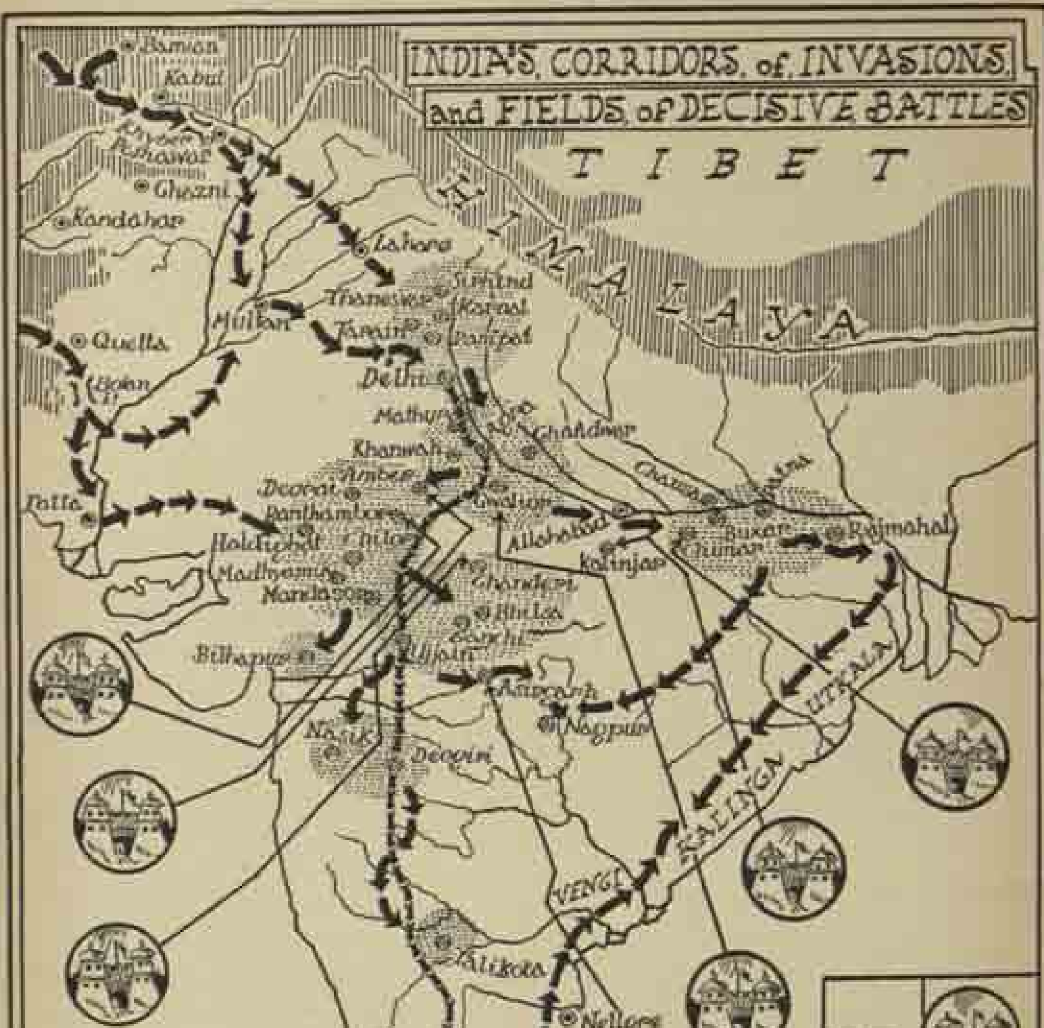
Mahāchīna, which Vasiṣṭha visited in order to obtain his initiation into the esoteric doctrine from the Buddha who was to be found neither in India nor in Tibet. P. C. Bagchi finds a close agreement between the sādhanās of Mahā-Chīna Tārā and Ekajaṭā, and regards these goddesses as identical. Thus the Brāhmanical goddesses Tārā, Ugra-Tārā, Śyāmā, Ekajaṭā and Mahānīla Sarasvatī are derived from China, where they were worshipped as Chīnakrama-Tārā or Mahā-chīna Tārā. According to the Sādhana-mālā, Ekajaṭā or Nīla-Tārā and Parṇaśabarī or Green Tārā, whose images have been found at Nālandā and Vikramapur, are, along with Mahā-chīna-Tārā, emanations of Akṣobhya. The priest of the cult was Siddha Nāgārjuna, who perhaps took the name of the sage Vasiṣṭha in order to hide his Buddhist origin. In the Sammoha Tantra, which was discovered by P. C. Bagchi in Nepal, and which was taken to Cambodia at the beginning of the ninth century A.D. from Northern India, having been composed a century or two earlier, there is a significant passage showing the Chinese origin of Mahā-nīla-sarasvatī or Tārā:

'The Māheśvarī said to Brahman, "Hear from me about Mahā-nīla Sarasvatī with attention! It is through her favour that you will narrate the four Vedas. There is a lake called Chola on the Western side of the Meru. The mother Goddess Nīlogratārā was born there. The light issuing from my upper eye fell into the lake Chola and took on a blue colour. There was a sage called Akṣobhya, who was Śiva himself in the form of a sage, on the northern side of the Meru. It was he who meditated first on the goddess, who was Pārvatī herself reincarnating in China deśa at the time of the great deluge".'

The word Cola denotes a lake in the Mongol region, while the western side of the Meru forms a part of China. From China by the Middle Asian caravan route to Uḍḍiyāna and Kāśmīra; from Tibet through the Shipki Pass to Jālandhara, and through the Nepalese passes to Nālandā, Odantapurī, Vikramaśīla, Jagaddala and Traikūṭaka; and again, from China by the North-eastern Burmese route to Kāmarūpa, Śrīhaṭṭa and Chittagong, there flowed in the middle ages many Tāntrika cults, in which Vajrayāna, Śaiva, Siddha and Brāhmanical Tāntrika ideas and practices blended. There is definite evidence that in the Traikūṭaka, Phullahari, Sannagara and Jagaddala vihāras of Bengal, Tibetan translations of a large number of Sanskrit texts were prepared. It is noteworthy, moreover, that the Indian Sahaja and the Chinese Tao are identical. We may recollect that Bhāskaravarman, King of Kāmarūpa, told a Chinese envoy to India that his family belonged to Mahāchīna, and requested him to

send a Sanskrit translation of Tao-te-king, the sacred text of Taoism, together with a portrait of Lao-tseu.

Whatever the foreign contributions may have been, however, there is no doubt that Tāntrikism, whether of the Vajrayāna, the Sahajayāna or the Kulāchāra pattern, though it may have developed certain rituals and practices in connection with a foreign culture, followed the well-established system of Indian thought, derived from the ancient Sāṅkhya dualism of Prakṛiti and Puruṣa. In fact it was the acceptance of this basic metaphysics of dualism that facilitated the adoption and assimilation of various local, aboriginal or foreign goddesses into the established categories of Śakti worship.


INDIA'S, CORRIDORS, of, INVASIONS, and FIELDS, of DECISIVE BATTLES
TIBET
HIMALAYA
Bamian
Kabul
Peshawar
Ghazni
Kandahar
Lahore
Sirhind
Karnal
Thanesar
Multan
Tarain
Panipat
Quetta
Delhi
Mathura
Chandwar
Khanwah
Amber
Patta
Ranthambor
Gwalior
Allahabad
Buxar
Chunar
Rajmahal
Haldighat
Chitor
Kalinjar
Madhyamika
Mandasor
Chanderi
Bilhapur
Ujjain
Nagpur
Nasik
Deogiri
UTKALA
KALINGA
VENGI
Talikota
Nellore
Kanchi
Dvarasamudra
Tanjore
Madura
Koyal
5
FORT
CORRIDOR OF INVASIONS
MALIK KAFUR'S MARCH
FIELD of DECISIVE BATTLES

CHAPTER XVI

THE WARLIKE CHIVALRY AND GLAMOUR OF THE RAJPUT RENAISSANCE

The Contest between Rajput and Muslim Power

FROM the seventh century onwards, the Persians and the Arabs, like the Greek traders of the preceding centuries, were settling on the Malabar and Kathiawar coasts and in the island of Ceylon. Such settlements flourished under the protection of Hindu kings and chiefs, but the rise of Islam and the expansion of the Saracenic Empire, from the frontiers of China in the East to Spain in the West within a century after Muhammad's flight from Mecca to Medina, changed the entire Asian political situation. The Arabs, after their conquest of Syria and Persia in A.D. 670, obtained control over the Persian Gulf, secured the legacy of the Persian maritime trade, and explored the Arabian Sea with a view to conquering the prosperous ports of the Gulf of Cambay and the west coast of India, thereby anticipating the Portuguese by eight and a half centuries.

The capture of a few Muslim girls sent by the King of Ceylon to the Governor of Iraq by the pirates of Cutch, and the failure of the ruler of Sind to restore the girls, led to the invasion of Sind by Qāsim in A.D. 712. Qāsim not only conquered Sind but also subjugated Kathiawar, Multan, Broach and parts of Gujarat and Malwa. Towards the middle of the eighth century the Arab Governors of Sind tried strenuously but unsuccessfully to penetrate into Gujarat and Malwa. India was heroically defended by Pulakeśin Chālukya of the Deccan and Nāgabhaṭṭa of Avanti: through them she overcame the forces of the Caliphate, which no power had been able to quell in Western and Central Asia, Africa or Spain; and this in spite of the advantages the Arabs possessed in a formidable fleet in the Arabian sea and a large base of operations in Sind. The victory of the Gurjara-Pratihāra ruler Nāgabhaṭṭa over the mighty host of Mlechchhas, those 'foes of godly deeds', in the words of the poet Bālāditya, restored Sind to Hindu

authority, and gave peace to India for over two and a half centuries, until the invasion of Mahmud of Ghazni. The Pratihāra Empire, under Bhoja I at the beginning of the ninth century, had its capital at Mahodaya-Śrī and extended to Paharpur in Bengal, Pehoa or Pṛithūdaka (in Karnal) in modern Punjab, and the Vindhyas in the South.

The occupation by Sabuktigīn (A.D. 977–997) and his son Mahmud of Ghazni (998–1030) of Khorasan, Afghanistan and parts of Central Asia, whence they had easy access to the plains of the Punjab, coupled with the Arab conquest of Sind and Multan on the flank of the Hindu states, offered special military advantages to the foreigners and completely undermined the defences of the north-west. It was this that enabled Mahmud to plunder the cities of Thāneśvara, Mathurā and Kannauj, and the temple of Somnāth in Gujarat, whose riches he used to adorn his own capital of Ghazni with mosques, aqueducts and libraries. At the threshold of the magnificent mosque at Ghazni were buried fragments of the Śiva liṅgaṃ of Somnāth, so that the true believer might tread them under foot. After the death of Mahmud in 1030, India, if we leave aside the Punjab, had a respite from Muslim invasions for about a century and a half. In this period the Chahamānas, with their capitals at Śākambharī (Sambhar) and Ajmer, gained possession of Rajputana and East Punjab, while the Gahaḍavālas occupied the middle land and ruled from Kannauj and Banaras. A Delhi pillar inscription of A.D. 1164 records that Vigraharāja IV or Viśāladeva (1153–1164), having brought the whole of North India under his suzerainty, made it a real abode of the Aryans by destroying the Mlechchhas, or Muslims. Meanwhile the empire of Ghazni broke into pieces as the result of the rise of the Afghans of Ghor. Muhammad Ghori displaced the Sultans of Ghazni, who took refuge in the Punjab at Lahore, and conquered Sind and the Punjab in 1192. The conquest of India's strategic ante-chamber in the north-west made the Turko-Afghan subjugation of Northern India easy. In 1194 Qutb-ud-dīn Aibak, Ghori's most faithful officer, defeated and slew Jayachandra and conquered Kanauj. Between 1197 and 1199 Bakhtiār Khiljī, with a small force, reduced Bihar and Bengal. The destruction of the Buddhist Universities of Nālandā, Vikramaśīla and Odantapurī and the sack of Nadia were great blows to Hindu culture and learning. By 1210, when Qutb-ud-dīn died, his Empire extended from the Punjab to Bengal. Only Rajputana, Malwa and a part of Gujarat remained unsubdued.

For three centuries the history of the Delhi Sultanate, from the

accession of Qutb-ud-din to Babar's invasion and conquest of Delhi in 1525, was a series of intrigues by Amirs and nobles of the Imperial court, murders and wars of succession. Through all these, however, Muslim power was consolidated. In 1340, under Muhammad-bin-Tughlaq, the Empire reached its maximum size, and included a large section of the Deccan and parts of the Malabar and Coromandal coasts. Thereafter it quickly shrank. In Northern India, Hindu resistance and revival rallied round the 'Boast of Rajasthan' at Ranthambhor under the brave Hamīra Deva, and at Chitor, where the 'Crimson Banner' and 'the Sun of Hinduism' (Hinduāna Sūraja) were kept blazing by the courage and prowess of the Guhila Rajput rulers, from Ratana Singh and Kumbhā to Sāṅgā and Pratāpa, and by the self-immolation of the Rajput women in terrible and tragic mass jauhars. Even the military prowess and liberal policy of the Emperor Akbar could not win over Rāṇā Pratāpa to the side of the Mughal.

The Genesis of the Rajput Peoples

The medieval period of Indian history, from the death of Harṣa in A.D. 648 to the conquest of Northern India by Akbar the Great Moghul in the middle of the sixteenth century, is conspicuous for the deeds of chivalry and heroism of Rajput warriors, the self-immolation of Rajput women, the glamour of the Rajput courts, and the remarkable development of architecture, sculpture and literature in Rajputana, Ajmer, Gwalior, Malwa and Gujarat. The Rajputs are descended from the many foreign stocks who came from the north-west, especially in the fifth and sixth centuries A.D., accepted Hinduism and were assimilated into the Hindu social order. They are principally the descendants of the Gurjaras, Parihāras, Hūṇas and other Central Asian tribes, as well as of such backward groups as the Gonds, Bhars, Gūjars, Jāṭs, Ābhiras, Khasiyas and Bhoṭiyās. The tenth and eleventh centuries saw the whole of Northern, Western and Central India occupied by the great Rajput peoples, who all traced their descent from the Agnikula, or fire-born, tribes, and who fought the battle for freedom in India with remarkable heroism and sacrifice for about four centuries after the first Muslim raids. Rājā Bhoja I, Pratihāra of Mahodaya-Śrī, Jayapāla Gahaḍavāla of Bhaṭindā, Bhoja Paramāra of Dhārā, Jayachandra Gaharwar of Kanauj and Banaras, Pṛithvī Rāja Chauhan of Ajmer and Delhi, and Mūlarāja

Solaṅki of Gujarat, the Chandela Rajas of Bundelkhand, the Kalachuris of the Central Provinces and the Pālas of Bengal, created new traditions of valour that were extolled by the bards and emulated by all rulers.

The ancient Kṣatriya groups had been well-nigh exterminated by the succession of foreign invasions and conquests, from those of the Indo-Bactrians, Śakas and Kuṣāṇas of the second century B.C. down to those of the White Hūṇas and Parihāras at the end of the fifth century A.D. More than half a millennium of fighting against foreigners had led to the virtual extinction of the ancient Kṣatriya tribes. The memory of this destruction lives in the Purāṇic legends of Paraśurāma, which contains the story of how the Agnikula Rajputs—the Pāramāra or Pawar, the Pratihāra or Parihāra, the Chauhan and the Solanki—were produced by the gods at Mount Abu, when the land was without any rulers. But the Rajput legend was no fiction: rather it facilitated the social acceptance and assimilation of some thirty-six foreign stocks which had come to India after the fall of the early Gupta empire and which now replaced the Kṣatriya families of earlier days. Fresh Rajput clans arose to replace those killed off in the seventeen invasions of Mahmud of Ghazni. Such were the Tomaras of Delhi, Gaharwars of Kanauj and Banaras, and the Chauhans of Ajmer. The Rajput peoples were also swelled by the upward social movement of various backward indigenous tribes of Āryāvarta and by intermarriage with the orders of Brāhmaṇas and Vaiśyas. In the tenth and eleventh centuries there was intermarriage on a large scale between the new Rajput-kṣatriyas and the upper castes, as the former spread all over Āryāvarta. At the same time the Gandharva form of marriage was the standard. In the Kathāsaritsāgara of Somadeva, dated between A.D. 1063-1081, we have a picture of a society in which there was a great intermingling of races and castes with the Gandharva marriage as the accepted pattern.

The Rajput Character

For the Rajput, from the time a boy reaching puberty was initiated into knighthood by the ritual of 'the binding of the sword', the consuming passion was war. His recreation was hunting and hawking. His models were the heroes of the Indian epics. Courageous and adventurous in the extreme, he was frequently haughty, stubborn and wilful. But as a rule he spared the vanquished, respected the

women-folk, and was generous to his followers and even to his enemies. Above all he was never unfair either in love or war. In their conduct the Rajput warriors reveal striking resemblances to the medieval knights of Europe. Their historian, Tod, observes: 'The Rajput chieftains were imbued with all the kindred virtues of the Western cavalier, but were far his superior in mental attainments'. Some of them, in contrast to European warriors of the age of chivalry, were no mean poets and scientists. At least three royal authors are known: the famous Bhoja of Dhārā (eleventh century), whose encyclopaedic knowledge is evident from his treatises on such diverse subjects as philosophy, politics, poetics, astronomy and architecture; the Kalachuri Mayūrarāja (about A.D. 800); and Vigraharāja IV Chauhan of Ajmer (about A.D. 1153), who revived the traditions of Samudragupta Kavirāja and the great Harṣa of Kanauj.

The Rajput woman was dignified, free and chaste, and exercised the ancient right of the Kṣatriya maiden to choose her own husband. She was the comrade of her husband in war as well as on the hunting field, and preferred death in the funeral fire to dishonour, defilement and servitude. A charming ritual was the binding of a silken tie on the wrist as a pledge of unflinching, almost quixotic, camaraderie through prosperity and adversity between persons and families. No one that sought aid or succour could be refused, even at the risk of grave danger. The spirit of heroic warfare in defence of land and culture bred the feeling: 'Life is an old garment; what does it matter if we throw it off. To die well is life immortal'. The Bhāṭs or Chāraṇas (bards) of Rajputana recited old ballads full of the heroism and courage, unswerving loyalty to clan and chieftain of the Rajput warriors and the purity, endurance and sacrifice of their queens. Here is a famous old Rajput legend concerning the self-immolation of the Rani of Chitor, as retold in Tod's Rajasthan. Her husband having fallen in battle the Rani asks one of his retinue:

' "Boy, tell me, ere I go, how bore himself, my lord?"

"As a reaper of the harvest of battle! I followed his steps as the humble gleaner of his sword. On the gory bed of honour he spread a carpet of the slain; a barbarian prince his pillow, he laid him down; and he sleeps ringed by his foes".

"Yet once again, oh boy, tell me how my lord bore himself".

"Oh mother, who can tell his deeds? He left no foe to dread or to admire him".

She smiled farewell to the boy, and adding, "My lord will chide my delay", sprang into the flames'.

The Chāraṇas of Mewar have kept alive the memory of the eight centuries of heroic deeds and heart-rending tragedies endured by the warriors and people of Chitor. No stronghold in India has so enthralled the imagination of Indian warriors through the ages with its deeds of heroism and sacrifice as Chitor, the principal fortress of Rajasthan and the centre of Rajput resistance, from Ratan Singh and his beautiful queen Padminī, who, besieged by Alauddin Khilji and coveted by him, led the entire garrison to the jauhar in 1297, to Rajas Jaimal and Pattā, the defenders of Chitor against Akbar in 1560. Even after the subjugation of Chitor, Pratāp Siṃha gathered the survivors of the terrible massacre of 30,000 inhabitants and 'single-handed for a quarter of a century withstood the combined efforts of the Empire, at one time carrying destruction into the plains, at another fleeing from rock to rock, feeding his family from the fruits of his native hills, and rearing the nursling heir Amar amidst savage beasts and scarcely less savage men, a fit heir to his prowess and revenge' (Tod).

The National Weakness Arising from Rajput Clannishness and Feudalism

However, the Rajputs, claiming to come of the bluest blood in India, 'the ornaments of the race of Raghu', quickly developed a pride of birth, local patriotism and parochialism which prevented the growth of any stable confederacy or larger union that might have successfully combated Muslim penetration and conquest. Socially speaking the Rajput warriors assumed a semi-divine status and isolated themselves from the rest of the community as a haughty and exclusive military aristocracy; their exclusiveness and punctiliousness being artificially fostered by the singers and hosts of retainers by whom they were constantly surrounded.

The diverse ethnic groups, distant from one another and with divergent social backgrounds, could not easily develop a national outlook of the kind that characterised the Vikramāditya tradition in the Gupta struggle against foreign invaders. Some of the Rajput chiefs, such as Gāṅgeyadeva Kalachuri of Chedi, Sindhurāja of Malwa and Tribhuvana-malla of Kalyan, assumed the title of Vikramāditya or Nava-Sāhasāṅka (new Sāhasāṅka), but they all proved powerless to repel the attacks of the new invaders. It is true that in the Hammir Mahākāvya we discern some measure of Hindu revivalism, but the

voice was too feeble and hardly spread beyond the mountain fastnesses of Mewar. Nationalism did not exist at the time of the Muslim invasion, in the sense that it could not rally princes and peoples as it did in the Gupta age. The martial Rajput race failed India at a critical moment. Or rather Brāhmanical culture failed these recent Sons of Kings, whose haughtiness, impetuosity and clannishness, fanned by bards, scholars and poets alike, rendered a common national effort difficult. The older Hindu theory of an empire extending from sea to sea (āsamudrakṣitīśa) suffered eclipse in the prevailing system, made up of a balance of power in a feudal hierarchy of chiefs of numerous tribes and clans. Such were the Gurjaras, Rāṣṭrakūṭas, Chandelas, Kalachuris, Pariharas, Pawaras, Solaṅkis, Tomaras and Gaharwārs, who carved out independent kingdoms of their own and fought chronically among themselves in Northern India. Traditional Hindu imperialism, which might have contributed towards building up a strong national unity and defence against Muslim aggression, was checkmated by Rajput clannishness and the social structure of Rajput feudalism.

The Rigidity of Caste and Purdah

The pride and exclusiveness of the Rajput clans soon reacted upon Indian society as a whole. Two formidable social defects with which the decline of Indian culture is associated, viz., caste stratification based on birth and the exclusion of women from the higher pursuits of life, are the legacy of the martial Rajput race. Caste rigidity in all ranks of society was a national reaction to the claims to sacred status and privilege put forward by the haughty and exclusive Rajput aristocracy, and also to the real danger of social intercourse with the Muslims, who encouraged conversion and threw open the highest offices to Hindu apostates. Rajput racial arrogance and Muslim defilement, indeed, laid the foundations of India's caste barriers and food and drink taboos, as well as the elaborate purdah system and the rigid seclusion of women of the upper ranks, during the long period of the Rajput struggle against the Muslim invaders. The genesis of early marriage for both boys and girls, the practice of sati, or a widow's self-immolation on the death of her husband, and the general confinement of women to the sphere of their homes have to be understood in the light of the crystallisation of the Rajput military élite and the real dangers of mass conversion and Muslim social conquest in Northern

India. The fair and accomplished Padminī, Rūpamatī and Padmāvatī are shining exceptions in an age that witnessed a sharp decline in the education and status of women, associated with the general sense of insecurity caused by Muslim aggression.

The traditional organic ordering of society according to the four varṇas, which was clarified in the Gupta age by the Mahābhārata as well as by the Smṛitis of Yājñavalkya and Manu, completely broke down in the middle ages. This was due in the first place to the free racial mingling with barbarian hordes that began in the second century A.D. and became pronounced from the sixth to the eleventh, and secondly, to the crystallisation of the resulting mixed stocks into the numerous ruling clans of Rajputs, whose exaggerated claims to divine status the Brāhmaṇas could not counteract by mere reference to the Dharma Śāstras.

The Degradation of Brāhmanism and Buddhism

In Āryāvarta decadence was clearly marked in the late middle ages. The Brāhmaṇas as an order came into disrepute. The sturdy, contemplative religion of the Gupta epoch gave place in the middle ages to left-hand Tāntrikism, with its sensualism, magic and human offerings, gruesomely described in Bhavabhūti's Mālatīmādhava (about A.D. 735) and Somadeva's Kathāsaritsāgara (A.D. 1063-1081). Kṣemendra's Kalāvilāsa (eleventh century) and Somadeva's Vetāla pañcha-viṃśatikā are full of sensation-mongering, superstition and trickery. Degraded Brāhmanism and Buddhism as well as Kāvya and folk-tale combined their resources to engender among the entire population the craving for marvels, awe and excitement rather than common sense; for irrationalism and immediacy rather than the ancient practice of self-discipline and the search for the Absolute and the Universal that were once widespread. At Kanauj or Mahodaya itself the court poet, Rājaśekhara, in his Karpūramañjarī, belonging to the close of the ninth century and written wholly in Prakrit, decries Vedic religion and extols Tāntrika Kaulāchāra. The magician Bhairavānanda by his Tāntrika magic brings about a meeting and subsequent union between the king and the imprisoned damsel Karpūramañjarī. He has contempt for mantra and tantra; his teachers have excused him from the ancient Indian discipline of knowledge and meditation. Magic, eroticism and sexual mysticism are found in sinister combination in many contemporary Brāhmanical and

Buddhist Tantra treatises, which teach how to win or subdue a wife, discover hidden treasure and make an enemy insane or kill him; and these penetrated even into didactic tales and fables.

Not only did salvation, wine and sex enter into an unholy combination in the Kaula religion, but the public swing festival of the Devi (Gaurī or Lakṣmī), which lasted for a month and was common from the tenth to the thirteenth century, became the occasion for amorous dalliances and escapades. Like the jewelled roof-terraces and the picture-galleries (chitra-bhittiniveśa), even the public gardens, where the religious swing festival was celebrated, served as a rendezvous for lovers, who saw their sweethearts in the swing before the image of the goddess, with waving chowries raised aloft, with showy rows of banners, dazzling-white, and with bells, ascending and descending.

There was a deterioration in the whole tone of social life, especially in the cities and towns. The sanctity of love, marriage and the family of the Gupta epoch was superseded by coarseness, infidelity and sensualism, stemming from the barbarians' code of life. This is reflected in such Sanskrit Kāvyas as Dāmodaragupta's Kuṭṭanīmataṃ, or Advice of a Hetaira (ninth century), and Kṣmendra's Samayamātṛikā, or Mother by Convention (eleventh century), which deal with the adventures of prostitutes and are frankly pornographic, based on meticulous study of the Kāmasūtra. Similarly, the widely popular Śuka-saptatī, or Seventy Tales of the Parrot, full of the cunning and deception practised by unchaste women on their credulous husbands, though amusing, throw light upon the general laxity of the age and the dissolution of family loyalties.

The Rajput Lack of Unity and Strategy

The aristocratic orders that took upon themselves the responsibility of fighting the Turko-Afghans not only isolated themselves from the rest of the community through their overweening pride but also fought bitterly amongst each other. In India of the thirteenth century Bhīmadeva of Pāṭana, Pṛithvīrāja of Ajmer and Jayachandra of Kannauj fought the Muslim invader separately for some time. But they did not act in concert when he returned with doubled force and fury. The imperial tradition at Kannauj (A.D. 520–1200) had languished by this time. There were separate foci of defence—Gujarat, Marwar, Sapādalakṣa or Medapeta—but the different Rajput clans among whom the country was parcelled up offered no allegiance to each

other; and the Rajput's lack of unity was aggravated by the disintegration of royal houses through polygamy and the institution of feudalism. The armies of the Turko-Afghan invaders on the other hand, consisting largely of roving adventurers stirred by the lure of booty, knew that in their case defeat would mean complete extermination; they fought with a determination and desperation born of the risks of plundering expeditions and campaigns in an unfamiliar and hostile country. The easy rout of the Rajputs by Muslim armies in the open terrain was also largely due to the old-fashioned Hindu strategy, based on ancient texts, the lack of training of both infantry and cavalry, and the impotence of the war elephants in face of the fast-manoeuvring, well-trained Turko-Afghan cavalry. India had no well-bred horses, or mules; for these she had to depend upon Azov, Arabia and Persia. Besides, the Turko-Afghans were skilled in archery, against which Rajput swordsmanship could be of little avail except in hand-to-hand combats. The Muslim's mobile hordes of mounted archers resorted not only to shock tactics but also to unscrupulous strategems, including even the defilement of the Hindu armies' sources of water; a ruse calculated to produce widespread dismay and depression in all ranks. They worked on the principle that all is fair in war; while the Hindu princes on the whole carried their code of chivalry to extremes, abhorred military tricks or devices, and sometimes even disdained to follow up the strategic consequences of hard-won victories. One of the tragedies of medieval Indian history is that Pṛithvirāja unaccountably failed to reap the full advantage of his decisive victory over Shahabuddin at the first battle of Tarain (1191). Shahabuddin's armies retreated without haste or difficulty to Afghanistan, whence they returned with much larger numbers to defeat and kill their former victor in the second battle of Tarain (1192).

The Muslim warriors not only showed a complete absence of chivalry, to the point of brutality, but they were fired with a zeal for 'the holy jehad' and fought fanatically and relentlessly, giving quarter to nobody, not even women and children. The common people, seeing their cities and temples sacked, plundered and desecrated and their heroic chiefs and leaders reduced to despair and mass suicide to a man and woman were completely demoralised; nor was the Hindu social structure such as to enlist their co-operation for a stubborn, prolonged resistance. Not since the shocking experience of the Hūṇa avalanche had the martial classes of Hindustan encountered such an unscrupulous, perfidious and pitiless foe. The Hindu warriors poured out their blood like water but could not stem the advance of an enemy

who violated every canon of war. The tragic destiny of the Hindu warrior of the Middle Ages has elicited the feeling comment of Babar; 'the Tiger', the romantic and illustrious conqueror of Hindustan, that the people 'knew how to die but did not know how to fight'.

Literary Activity in the Independent Kingdoms

Yet the outstanding feature of the Turko-Afghan penetration was that it consisted of a series of successful sporadic adventures and enterprises by individual Turko-Afghan chieftains rather than direct conquest by the central authority of the Delhi Sultanate; though the latter took full advantage of the former's fanatical zeal and initiative. In fact the control the Delhi Sultanate exercised over the outlying regions was dubious from the very beginning. Thus the independent kingdoms of Rajputana, Gujarat, Malwa and, above all, Vijayanagara experienced from decade to decade outbursts of literary, cultural and religious activity. Smaller Hindu states, such as Kāliñjara in Bundelkhand and Mithilā in Bihar, also participated in the Hindu cultural revival as scholars and poets took refuge there. In Rajputana the famous Hammīra-vijaya extolled the glory of Hammir Deva of Ranthambhor in terms of glowing patriotism. For the Rajput bards had soon begun to compose ballads extolling the heroic deeds of their patrons in Hindi; thus filling the common people with martial ardour. The vernacular literature was born in the crucible of bitter struggle for land and culture against Turko-Afghan aggression.

The most celebrated of the Rajput bards was Chanda Baradāi, who wrote the Pṛithvīrāja Rāso, which commemorates the heroism of Pṛithvīrāja Chahamāna of Delhi and Ajmer, one of the most courageous and chivalrous of the Rajput heroes, a charming, romantic and colourful figure in Indian history. Here is Chanda's famous description of the meeting of the fair Padmāvatī and Pṛithvīrāja, who carried her off as his bride:

'Filling a golden tray with pearls,
Lighting a lamp and waving it round,
With her confidant at her side, boldly the maiden
Set forth, as Rukmiṇī went to meet Murāri,
Worshipping Gaurī, revering Śaṅkara,
Circumambulating and touching feet.
Then, on seeing Pṛithvīrāja,

She smiled bashfully, hiding her face in shame,
Seizing her hand and setting her on horse,
The king, the Lord of Delhi, took her away.
The rumour spread that outside the city
They were carrying off Padmāvatī by force.
Drums were beaten; horses and elephants saddled;
They ran, armed, in all directions.
"Seize! Seize!" shouted every warrior.
Rage possessed the heroes and their king;
On the field fell heads and headless trunks of the foe;
The foe fell on the field of battle.
Turning his face towards Delhi,
Pṛithvīrāja departed, having won the battle;
And all the chiefs rejoiced.'

A contemporary of his, Jaganāyaka, composed the Ālhakhaṇḍa, in which he described the heroism and love of Ālhā and Ūdala of Mahobā; and another poet was Śāraṅgadhara, who in his two works, Hammīra Rāso and Hammīra Kāvya, takes up the theme of the valorous deeds of Rāya Hammīra of Ranthambhor.

Rajputana also became important for its cultivation of Sanskrit literature. An important drama, Hammīra-mada-mardana, was written by Jaya Siṃha Sūri (A.D. 1219–1229). The warrior prince Kumbhā of Mewar was himself a poet; he wrote a treatise on music entitled Saṅgītarāja and a commentary on Jayadeva's Gīta-govinda. The latter was composed at the court of Lakṣmaṇasena of Bengal, the court that was adorned by five jewels—the poets Jayadeva, Umāpatidhara, Dhoī, Charaṇa and Govardhana. Of these Jayadeva was, of course, the most celebrated, being generally regarded as the last great poet of Sanskrit literature.

The Perfection of Symbolism and Technique in the Gītagovinda

His Gītagovinda Kāvyaṃ, composed at the end of the twelfth century is a unique and remarkably original piece of poetry in the world's literature. It combines elements of lyrical drama, melody, folk-pageant and dance, and has a marvellously sensitive and complex structure, adapting song and speech, narrative and description to an unfolding psychological situation that symbolises the maturing of religious sentiments in the human soul. For in the

Gītagovinda the human passions of longing and hope, disappointment and anguish of Rādhā and the cowherd maidens cannot be distinguished from the sentiments of mystical devotion and ecstasy that are the poem's supreme message. Jayadeva's choice of words is superb; meaning and sound are in complete harmony with one another and with the mood expressed and consolidated, as the moving drama of love weaves the strands of spiritual emotion into a most subtle and beautiful fabric, comparable with the finished embroidery of the contemporary Bengal textiles or with the delicately carved white marble decoration of the temples at Mount Abu. Yet there is no straining of language and metaphor in what is a popular yātrā, meant to be enacted in the temples and at festivals. According to Keith, 'Jayadeva's work is a masterpiece, and it surpasses in its completeness of effect any other Indian poem. It has all the perfection of the miniature word-pictures which are so common in Sanskrit poetry, with the beauty which arises as Aristotle asserts from magnitude and arrangement'.

The Gītagovinda is one of the most popular texts in India. Within a century of being written one of its verses was quoted in an inscription at Anhilwārapattana in Gujarat. There was Kumbhā's commentary on it in the fifteenth century, and in the South, Vallabhāchārya mentioned it as one of the most authoritative texts. Then it became the vade-mecum of the Chaitanya-Vaiṣṇava in Bengal. Concerning the poet's devotion to Kṛiṣṇa we have several legends, recorded in Nābhādāsa's Bhaktamāla. While the Gīagovinda has been imitated extensively in Sanskrit and its exquisite, faultless lyrics are set to music and widely sung even now, its spirit and temper were profoundly influenced by the emerging vernacular literature. The following extract from it, in which Rādhā is invited by her companion to abandon her shyness and enter the bower where the Lord awaits her, symbolises the approach of the human soul to the divinity:

'Into his playground 'neath the lovely thicket, come, O Rādhā, to Mādhava, thy face all smiling with the eagerness of love. Into his grove, with young aśoka shoots for thy couch, come, O Rādhā, to Mādhava; play with him, as thy necklet quivers on the cups of thy bosom. In this bright home wrought of many a flower, come, O Rādhā, to Mādhava; play with him, thou whose body is tender as a flower.'

In another passage Kṛiṣṇa's beauty is described: 'His black body sandal-bedecked, clad in yellow, and begarlanded, with his earrings dancing on his cheeks as he disports himself, smiling ever, Hari here amidst the band of loving maidens makes merry in the merriment of

their games. One of the maidens clasps Hari fast to her throbbing heart, and sings in the high Pañchama key. Yet another stands lost in dreams of Madhusūdana's lotus face, whose playful glances have caught and won her heart for its own.'

The Luxuriance and Lyricism of Rajput Architecture

The Gitagovinda Kāvya in its perfection of technique is to Sanskrit poetry what the temples of Dilavara, Khajurāho, Udayapura, Bhuvaneśvara and Koṇāraka are to Indian architecture. The Rajputs were great builders as well as warriors. The magnificent forts of Chitor, Ranthambhor, Jodhpur, Mandu, Gwalior, Chanderi, Datia and Orchha are remarkable strongholds of heroic resistance as well as elegant works of art. Among the outstanding examples of civil architecture are the palaces at Amber, Udayapur, Jodhpur and Gwalior, where hillsides and lakes have been utilised with superb architectural and engineering skill for the purposes of both defence and decorative grandeur. The Amber palace has been characterised as a 'rose-red city half as old as time'. The Emperor Babar, speaking of the Rajput castles, observed: 'They are singularly beautiful . . . the domes are covered with plates of copper-gilt. The outer surface of the wall is inlaid with green-painted tiles. All around they have inlaid the walls with figures of plantain trees made of painted tiles'. Many artificial lakes, reservoirs, bathing-ghats and chhatris (tombs) were also constructed by the Rajput rulers, with commendable skill in engineering and architecture, both of which are still living traditions in Rajputana.

The glamour of Rajput culture is enshrined most nobly, however, in Hindu, Buddhist and Jain temple architecture, from Gujarat to Orissa and from the Central Provinces to the Punjab Himālayas. Here and there frescoes are still preserved on the ceilings of some of the temples, while the sculptures at Mahobā, Khajurāho, Udayapura, Bhuvaneśvara and Koṇāraka reveal a suavity, grace and mechanical perfection unparalleled in Indian art. Many art critics and historians consider the Kaṇḍarīya-Mahādeva temple at Khajurāho, the liṅgarāja temple at Bhuvaneśvara, the temple at Koṇāraka and the Teli-kā-mandira at Gwalior to be the finest achievements of Indian temple architecture. The Nīlakaṇṭha or Udayeśvara temple at Udayapura, Gwalior, built by Udayāditya Paramāra between 1059 and 1080 is a less famous medieval temple, but one that certainly deserves

greater attention from art historians; for it is one of the loveliest in India. With its entrance pavilions and subsidiary shrines, its assembly hall and sanctus sanctorum with a steeple, all exquisitely correlated with one another, it is a religious lyric in stone, a cut diamond of artistry in horizontal, vertical and circular lines, planes and volumes, comprising a sort of curvilinear pyramid which blends poise and sublimity. Refinement is added by the narrow flat bands that run from the base to the summit of the temple and by the succession of miniature replicas of the main tower that rise tier upon tier on all sides of the principal shrines, combining to create an illusion of quicker and higher ascent. From a distance the temple looks like Śiva himself wearing his gorgeous and gigantic head-dress. The logical coherence and rigour of the temple plan are combined with an incredible profusion of sculpture and ornamentation on the surface and on railings, pillars, walls and roofs.

The temples at Khajurāho in Bundelkhand, which were built by the Chandela Rajputs between A.D. 950 and 1050, are also some of the finest in India. There is here, as at Bhuvaneśvara, Koṇāraka and Udayapura, a synthesis of architectural designs that can be found in scarcely any other age or region in India. The medieval Indian temple comprises a unified, lucid structural pattern, its different parts, ardhamaṇḍapa, maṇḍapa, antarāla, and garbhagṛiha integrating into a superb architectural whole. Like that of the Gothic church, its superstructure leads the eye upwards through graduated rises and falls to ever higher levels. The impression of soaring is stressed by clusters of similar turrets (śikharas or śṛiṅgas) round the central tower, their water-pots (kalaśas) punctuating the ascending curves. From a distance the temple looks like the Kailāśa mountain with its many flanking peaks (śṛiṅgas) or again, like Śiva himself wearing his jaṭāmukuṭa.

Medieval temple architecture is always tenderly lyrical and lavishly adorned with sculptured figures and floral decorations, expressing the central idea of Indian worship—the immanence of the deity in all forms and appearances, animal, human and celestial, beautiful and bizarre, voluptuous and dreadful. Lyricism and a sensuous love of nature, recalling features of the Gupta Renaissance, as well as delicacy and magnificence characterise the vast number of temples that blossomed forth in the period of Rajput resurgence in the plains of Rajputana, Malwa, Gujarat, Kathiawar and Kutch from the eighth to the thirteenth century. The munificence of kings, merchants and nobles and the religious zeal of artisans and craftsmen flowed for well-

nigh six centuries into the making of these temples, most of which are now in ruins, owing to the ravages of time and Muslim vandalism. It was in fact the constant threat of raid and destruction by Muslim invaders that promoted the ardent devotionalism which underlay the extreme luxuriance and exhuberance of carving. The extraordinary richness and prolificness of embellishment, the outcome of both piety and a sense of beauty, combined to create some of the architectural and sculptural marvels of the world.

Major Types of Figure Sculpture

Late medieval figure sculpture may be divided into four major types. First, we frequently come across the figure of the Surasundarī, Nāyikā or Apsarā—the dancer at Indra's court. Tāntrika metaphysics and myth gave a new sense of form to Indian sculpture for more than half a millennium, from the eighth to the thirteenth centuries. The Chandela, Pāla-Sena and Kaliṅgan schools of sculpture in particular were characterised by a certain startling dynamism, naturalism and immanent sense of life, which arose from the conception of the Deity as Form and Beauty in the Universe (Śakti). The Nāyikā of the earth or the Apsarā of heaven, unattached to home and family, symbolises in Indian culture the blandishment and loveliness of woman; and medieval sculptors, expressing man's eternal delight in feminine beauty, loved to depict her endlessly, in all her voluptuous poses. Born of the naïve naturalism of the Indian soil, fertilised by Tāntrika myth, she has as important a place in Indian art as Venus and Prima Vera in European art. Radiant with sensuous charm, these lovely women of the gods were depicted in seductive attitudes derived from no human models, as well as in self-transcendence and aloofness from the world in the contemplation of their own beauty, reflected in mirrors in their hands, which is the sport and delight of the Absolute. It is also striking that inwardness is often emphasised by a complete omission of the eye-balls. These celestial maidens are to be found in every niche, on every pillar, and all round the walls of the temples. Such repetition itself indicates joy and an exuberant feeling of the immanence of the deity. For what is the Surasundarī or Nāyikā except the undefined human spirit, akin in its essence and movement to the Divine?

Secondly, we see everywhere erotic couples carved with remarkable precision, delicacy and psychological suggestiveness, especially in the

Śaiva shrines. Here it is Tāntrika contemplation and ritual (sādhana-mālā) that surmount the barriers between the higher and ideal things of experience and the life of the senses and emotions in a manner that may seem somewhat strange to the Western mind. Nowhere in the history of the world's art do we find such a blend of impersonalism and delight in the senses, of abstraction and elegance, as in the sculptured couples of medieval art, which bears in its bosom the transmutation of the senses and the profound awareness of life in its full comprehensiveness and intensity achieved by Tāntrika myth and religion. The mithunas, or couples in erotic embrace, symbolise the metaphysical truth of Unity in Duality, the inseparableness of Being and Becoming, Essence and Manifestation, which constitute the polarity of the masculine and feminine forces in Nature and Man.

Thirdly, all parts of the temple except the tower are covered with secular scenes of military processions, pageants, festivals, sport and war, dancing, drinking and luxurious court life, reflecting the pomp and delirium of the times, when war was a natural condition and peace a hectic preparation for battle.

Finally, medieval temples contain some of the finest images of Śiva Naṭarāja in the posture of the Tāṇḍava dance. The earliest Naṭarāja representations belong to the sixth and seventh centuries A.D. and are to be found at Bādāmī, Aihole and Ellora. The worship of Naṭarāja as a special cult was once widespread throughout India and led to the construction of magnificent images, with variants in the different regions based on differences in the dhyāna mantras. There is a splendid image of Śiva Naṭarāja at Ujjain of the eighth-ninth century A.D., and another in the Nīlakaṇṭha Udayeśvara temple (eleventh century) at the centre of the medallion on its main spire. The latter is supported on each side by dancing images of the goddess Kālī or Yoginī and flying angels, and also by the entire spiral dance-movement of the decorations, capped by the gorgon motif. The horizontals of the many miniature temples above the medallion accentuate by contrast the spreading dance-movement. The Naṭarāja is the symbol of eternal poise in movement in the Hindu theory of nature, life and mind. Over the perpetual pulsation of death and life, joy and pain, pleasure and warfare, presides the Divine dancer, the steps of whose cosmic dance are the endless oscillations of silence and movement, creation and destruction, in every instant as in every yuga. Indian art from Bhājā and Māmallapuram across the centuries reveals the cycle of birth and death, appearance and disappearance

as a vast illusion, and the Naṭarāja is the most logical as well as the most beautiful presentation of life as an ever-recurrent Becoming, an eternal Tension. In medieval Vishṇu myth and art there is also the figure of the Dancing Kāliya Kṛiṣṇa, celebrating his victory over the dragon—a familiar theme in medieval temple sculpture.

The Symbols of Joy and Pain in Rajput Sculpture

The interplay of life and death, joy and pain, in Rajput culture found harmonious expression in these cosmic dance images, of Śiva, Kālī or Chāmuṇḍā, Kṛiṣṇa and Gaṇeśa, who dance eternally, not merely in the temples but also in the harsh and relentless forces of nature, which were more apparent in an epoch of desperate struggle, defeat and disaster. Medieval sculpture expressed in these images India's acceptance, in the manner of Nietzsche, of universal joy, pain and force. If Śiva Naṭarāja embodies the metaphysical notion of universal rhythm and exaltation in nature and human life in an image of terrible super-human joy and beauty, the dancing Kṛiṣṇa with his flute is full of human charm and tenderness, though expressive of the same cosmic movement. These two motifs represent the conflicting attitudes to life, gentle and harsh, chivalrous and brutal, that were so strangely fused in Rajput behaviour, and that made up the strands of the complex Rajput personality. The complementary or balancing roles of affection and aggression, generosity and callousness were born of the contrast between the spiritual quietism and the martial ardour that constituted the discipline of Rajput society.

Perhaps success in arms and triumph over an implacable, unscrupulous foe would have developed the gentler and warmer side of Rajput culture. Its grim and sombre aspects are illustrated by the terrible rite of mass suicide or jauhar (jātu gṛiha of the Mahābhārata, in which the Pāṇḍavas were sought to be burnt *en masse*), which symbolises and celebrates the victory of the Rajput soul over death and dishonour. The notable instances of jauhar in Rajput history are the self-immolation of Jayapāla of Udabandha when defeated by Mahmud of Ghazni; of Hammir Deva of Ranthambhor, who was defeated by Alauddin Khilji; of Rana Ratan Singh's queen, Padminī, of Chitor; of the Raja of Kapila, defeated by Muhammad Tughlaq; of Bhayya Puran Mal and Medini Rai of Chanderi, defeated by Sher Shah and Babur respectively; of the common people of Delhi during the massacre of Timur and of the besieged garrison of Chitor at the

time of Akbar's subjugation and cruel massacre. Tod gives the following description of the 'terrible rite' at Chitor:

'The funeral pyre was lighted within "the great subterranean retreat", in chambers impervious to the light of day, and the defenders of Chitor beheld in procession the queens, their own wives and daughters to the number of several thousands. The fair Padmini closed the throng. They were conveyed to the cavern, and the opening closed upon them, leaving them to find security from dishonour in the devouring element'.

The collective suicide, which elicited the profound admiration even of Muslims, from Al-Biruni downwards, was largely a reaction against the brutality and absence of chivalry or even fairness on the part of the Muslim invaders, who prosecuted the jehads fanatically and relentlessly, and from whom no quarter could be expected.

The virile and brave Rajput race reacted against misfortune and calamity with infinite toil, fortitude and piety; and these are reflected and symbolised by the architectural and sculptural extravagance of the period, rooted in its overwrought emotional life. The ports of Gujarat, such as Cambay and Surat, which were on the crossroads of medieval sea-borne commerce between the Oriental and Occidental worlds, accumulated vast wealth and made magnificence possible; while in many cities artisans and craftsmen of all sorts participated in the communal enterprise of temple building, as in medieval Gothic Cathedral building in Europe. The patient chisel of the mason and carver, at the behest of the primordial emotions of anxiety, pain and supplication of the masses, produced veritable dreams of fretted marble and carved stone, surpassing anything seen elsewhere in their minute, elaborate and prolific ornamentation of ceilings, pillars, doorways, panels and niches, and their repetition of radiant fairy forms in manifold poses and moods in Gujarat, Southern Rajputana, Bundelkhand and Orissa. The crisp, thin and translucent treatment of the marble at Mount Abu, the principle of multiplicity and ornamentation (rather than severity and simplicity) in architectural design in Bundelkhand and Orissa, and the dissolution of decorative work, including chaitya arches enclosing heads and makaras in arabesque, in numerous Nāgara shrines in the north, testify alike to profound intensity and poignancy. Whether at Khajurāho or Bhuvaneśvara, at Koṇāraka or Udayapura, or at Dilavārā (Devalavāḍā) and Anhillavāḍā, the lavishness is beauty, the sheer profusion is adornment, in architectural and sculptural treatment, symbolic of the splendour and piety of the Rajput court, and

expressive of the high-strung emotions of the Rajput people, for whom insecurity was as much a permanent state as devotional self-abandon before Śiva, Kṛiṣṇa and Durgā a familiar experience.

The Fairy City of the Sacred Mountain

The exuberance, finesse and piety of Rajput culture have left their indelible stamp on such medieval cities as Jayapura, Dilavārā, Dabhoi, Jhinjubād, Girnār and Śatruñjaya. Some of these are little known. The following description of Śatruñjaya by Forbes, the well-known historian of Gujarat, shows how the upsurge of poignant emotions in the Rajput race, whose way of life alternated between warfare and entertainment by minstrels, genealogists, priests and dancing girls, has converted a whole city and its mortal and immortal inhabitants into marble, with the incredibly elaborate and lavish ornamentation and reiteration dear to the Rajput heart.

'There is hardly a city in India, through its length and breadth, from the river of Sind to the sacred Ganges, from Himālaya's diadem of ice peaks to the throne of his virgin daughter, Rudra's destined bride, that has not supplied, at one time or other, contributions of wealth to the edifices which crown the hill of Pālitana; street after street and square after square, extend these shrines of the Jain faith, with their stately enclosures, half palace, half fortress, raised, in marble magnificence, upon the lovely and majestic mountain, and like the mansions of another world far removed in upper air from the ordinary tread of mortals. In the dark recesses of each temple one image or more of Ādinātha, of Ajita, or of some of the Tīrthaṅkaras, is seated, whose alabaster features, wearing an expression of listless repose, are rendered dimly visible by the faint light shed from silver lamps; incense perfumes the air, and barefooted, with noiseless tread, upon the polished floors, the female votaries, glittering in scarlet and gold, move round and round in circles, chanting forth their monotonous, but not unmelodious, hymns. Śatruñjaya indeed might fitly represent one of the fancied hills of eastern romance, the inhabitants of which have been instantaneously changed into marble, but which fay hands are ever employed upon, burning perfumes, and keeping all clean and brilliant, while fay voices haunt the air in these voluptuous praises of the Devas'.

CHAPTER XVII

THE FOURTH REFORMATION

THE BHAKTI AND SŪFĪ MOVEMENTS AS BRIDGES BETWEEN HINDUISM AND ISLAM

The Glory of Dravidian Culture

AT the beginning of this millennium, while Northern India was reeling from the devastating and repeated blows of the Turko-Afghan invaders, the Dravidian South was experiencing one of its most brilliant political and cultural renaissances. Only a year before the first invasion of Sabuktigin, the Chola ruler Rājarāja the Great (A.D. 985–1018) began his reign at Tanjore. Under him the Tamil empire of the Cholas reached its peak. The Chola Empire was the largest of India's maritime empires and included Ceylon, the Nicobar Islands and part of the Malay peninsula and the Indian Archipelago. Rājarāja's worthy son, Rājendra Chola I (1012 to 1044), with the help of his powerful fleet, extended the supremacy of the Chola Empire over Bengal, defeating its ruler Mahīpāla I. The vast and magnificent Śiva temples of South India, built in the form of a square and enclosing a tank, arose in this age; and Tamil literature, full of passion and piety, spread from Coromandal to Ceylon, Java and Kambuja. Pagan, Borobodur and Angkor Vat proclaimed from the ninth to the twelfth centuries the spread of Dravidian culture to South-East Asia, as the conquest of the rich maritime possessions of the Śailendra Dynasty at Sumatra by Rājendra Chola I in the eleventh century testified to the might of the Southern fleet.

Dravidian culture was vigorous and unfettered, blending the secular and the religious, the abstract and the lyrical, in a happy synthesis. The cosmic grandeur and impersonality of Śiva at Bādāmi, Ellora and Elephanta underlie the spirit of Dravidian sculpture. The Gopurams, or gateways, of the Dravidian temples, with their layers of reliefs illustrating secular and religious scenes, embody the conception of the immanence of the deity; while within the temples in the Vimānas, or inner shrines, are colossal lingams or vast reclining

images of Viṣṇu lying asleep in the cosmic waters—symbols of God's transcendence. There are also the superb Śiva Naṭarājas, of which the bronze masterpieces date from the palmy days of the Chola Empire. A warm and tender current of human-cum-divine emotions, stemming from the Alvars, the itinerant ministrels of Bhakti who swept through South India from the seventh to the ninth centuries, also went into the making of many pleasing Śiva and Kṛiṣṇa images, such as Śiva the lute-holder, the protector of art and letters and Kāliya Kṛiṣṇa dancing the serpent dance.

The Contribution of the Alvar Religion

The Alvars were the real harbingers of the Rāmānuja-Rāmānanda tradition, through their stressing of divine grace and man's bhakti, or ardent devotion, as the great way of deliverance. The most celebrated of them was Nammalvar, the author of the Tiruviruttam, which is full of burning passion for the Divine.

The Alvars did not merely stand for an ardent, sincere religion; they also challenged Brāhmanism, priesthood and caste gradation. Against the latter Kapila put forward the following argument: 'In the various lands of the Oriyas, Mlechchhas, Hūṇas, Sinhalese, the slender-waisted Jonakas, Yavanas and Chinese there are no Brahmans; but ye have set up in this land a four-fold division, as if it were an order distinguished in primal nature. By conduct are high and low degrees distinguished. The bull and the buffalo are unlike of kind: have male and female of these two classes ever been seen to unite one with one another and breed offspring? But ye men, who are by birth all of the same kind, do ye not see that if male and female of the orders which ye proclaim to be different unite one with one another, offspring is born from the union? Are not the sons of a Pulai woman united with a Brahmin likewise Brahmins?' In their hymns the Alvars continually stressed the universal applicability of Divine grace to all creatures or jīvas, regardless of their birth and station in life. Divine compassion, or dayā, and man's self-surrender, or prapatti, were linked together in the Alvar religion of universal redemption, which later became the essence of the Bhāgavata Dharma.

God's condescension to the low-born has seldom been so elegantly and powerfully expressed as in the following hymn of the Alvar Periya:

> Thou did'st not call him dull, or foe to life,
> Or low of caste, but pitiest him;

On him thy kindly grace didst pour, and say:
'She with the shy deer's modest glance
Thy friend is—and my brother, thine'; and when
He would not stay behind, for joy,
'Thou art my friend, stay here!' thou saidst; such words
So fit my heart that I have found
Thy feet, thou with the colour of the seas,
Lord of Śrīraṅgam with its beauteous trees.

Thou did'st not spurn the great son of the Wind
As ape, and of another race,
But, so that love and longing greater grew
Than ocean, thou didst Love, and say,
'There cannot be a recompense for all
That thou hast done for me; I will
Embrace thee, thou of faultless truth!' That such
A shining boon to me may come,
Longing, the refuge of thy feet I seize,
Lord of Śrīraṅgam with its beauteous trees.

When gathering lotus in a beauteous pool
By groves of fragrant flowers girt,
The elephant by mighty crocodile
Was seized, so that its end was nigh:
He thought upon the shelter of thy feet . . .
Knowing the mighty wrath thou hadst,
Such that the life of that beast, cruel-mouthed,
Was shaken, I, too, come to thee;
Thy slave, the refuge of Thy feet I seize,
Lord of Śrīraṅgam with its beauteous trees.

When came a poison-dropping, angry snake
To thee for refuge terror-struck,
Thou did'st become its refuge, and didst give
It for protection to the bird,
Thy beauteous slave. Knowing this grace thou show'dst,
I, fearing Yama's messengers,
So harsh of speech, and thy cruelties which they,
Fierce ones, will do, have come to thee:
Thy slave, the refuge of Thy feet I seize,
Lord of Śrīraṅgam with its beauteous trees.

(Translated by Hooper)

The Śrīmadbhāgavataṃ, which was probably composed between A.D. 900–1000 at Kāñchī, the famous South Indian seat of learning, had a profound influence on the Bhakti movement throughout the length and breadth of India; its total influence indeed has probably been greater than that of the Bhagavadgītā. The Mahā-bhāgavata, as it was called in the middle ages, developed the Alvar tradition and stressed the inscrutable, transcendental nature of God. In the first decade of this millennium, when Mahmud of Ghazni was beginning his expeditions of plunder and destruction, shaking the very foundations of social and spiritual life in the North, the age of the saints and mystics was ending in South India and that of the teachers and philosophers was commencing. The last of the mystics was Nammalvar, whose disciple, Nātha Muni, made in A.D. 1000 the famous collection of hymns (Prabandhas) that are still recited in the major temples of South India.

Nātha Muni's grandson, Yāmunāchārya, was also his spiritual grandson and the precursor of Rāmānuja. Vaiṣṇava and Śaiva theology lost at this time their sharp edges of difference in the assertion of the unity of the godhead and in the ardent adoration of a personal deity. Buddhism and Jainism were rapidly declining. The feeling against formalism and the caste system was waxing stronger. On the intellectual side, the protest against the pure ceremonialism of the Pūrva Mīmāṃsā was gaining strength, and Śaṅkarāchārya's doctrine of Māyā relaxed its hold.

The Moral Earnestness and Devotionalism of Rāmānuja

It was in this intellectual climate that the great philosopher Rāmānuja (1037–1137), who first obtained instruction in Śaṅkara's Kevala-Advaita at Kāñchi, expounded his well-known principles of Viśiṣṭādvaita (qualified monism). In several respects Viśiṣṭādvaita has a greater appeal to many contemporary minds than the uncompromising transcendental monism of Śaṅkara, harmonising as it does reason and intuition, immanence and transcendence. Here it is not knowledge but knowledge-cum-mystical intuition which brings out clearly the nature of the Absolute (Brahman), and the relation between the Absolute and the real, self-conscious and eternal self. The self (jīva) is a mode of the Absolute, equally free, changeless and supreme (chit), and equally entangled in the chains of karma and in relations with gross matter (achit). When the self sheds its finiteness

and mutability—and this it can only do as a result of intense spiritual yearning, as felt by the mystics, such as Nammalvar, whom Rāmānuja adores, and as enjoined in the Viṣṇupurāṇa, on which he, in contrast to Śaṅkara, leans so much—it finds its real home in the Absolute. In such an adventure of the soul, treading the path of devotion and surrender (prapatti), God helps. For God is redemptive Love, and pines for union with jīva. Thus the limited and ignorant self rises into its essential infinitude and omniscience, and Truth and Goodness become realised in every human act of love, sharing and service.

Rāmānuja's theory of the transformation (Pariṇāma) of Brahman into the reality of the world, in contrast to Śaṅkara's theory of illusory manifestation, is based on the prior teachings of Ṭaṅka, Dramiḍa, Guhadeva, Kapaidim, and Bharuchi. The Viśiṣṭādvaita owes a great debt also to Nātha Muni and Alavandar, his grandson, who assimilated the Pāñcharātra into the Alvar tradition of the South. It is the fair fruit of the marriage between the ancient Bhāgavatism of the North and the mystical ecstasy of the Alvars of the South. Here Vedānta contemplation or dhyāna, and devotion or bhakti merge. Vāsudeva is the inner self of the self, in the form, 'I am thee, thou holy Divinity, and thou art myself'. The Īśvara of Śaṅkara Vedānta, holy and perfect, is transformed from the ruler into the redeemer, whose compassion (kṛipā) cancels karma. Brahman assumes the dual forms of Law and Love (Nārāyaṇa and Śrī), and is also Beauty (Bhuvana-sundara) and Goodness. That which is beyond incarnates himself as Love in human form, to satisfy his longing for union with the finite creature who is his very self (Mahātman). With reference to the assertion of the Bhagavad Gītā, 'Noble are they all (the four orders of doers of righteousness), but the man of knowledge (jñāna) I deem my very self', Rāmānuja in his commentary on the Gītā asks what the nature of this knowledge is, and answers thus: 'My very life depends on Him. If it be asked how, the reason is that just as He cannot live without me, His Highest Goal, I cannot live without Him'. Wretched, forlorn man, caught up to God by his bhakti-cum-jñāna, becomes His fellow-worker in aiding mankind to regain freedom. Mankind is finally embraced in eternal collective ecstasy and bliss. This is undoubtedly a more positive demand for service and love than Śaṅkara's doctrines of transcendence and illusion (Māyā).

The Democratisation of Vaiṣṇavism

Morality in the Śaṅkara-Vedānta suffers owing to the system's inadequate allowance for the imperfections and evils of the universe. These demand not the Absolute that creates the world and man and abandons them to their fate, but one who wishes, impels and loves. Rāmānuja's doctrine stresses, not the notion of an abstract Pure Being, but its attributes of Goodness and Beauty to an infinite Degree (Saguṇa Īśvara); and it rejects Śaṅkara's doctrine of Māyā, which neither gives scope for the mercy and redeeming love (kṛipā) of God (Īśvara) in this sinful world, nor for the ardent yearning, ecstasy and joy of the mystics (bhakti). From the moral viewpoint the conception of God as the inner counsellor and censor (antaryāmin), and the law of karma, embodying the Divine will and purpose, which cannot be set aside even in the midst of the universal processes of destruction and creation, constitute a call to righteousness of the self. Bhakti or prapatti becomes in itself the fruition of a righteous and disciplined life, in which God's compassion is a perennial support and inspiration. From the religious viewpoint, God as Pure Essence is superseded by a God who vouchsafes his fellowship to man as part of his sport and desire (līlā), a loving and just Lord whose supreme status man can claim and attain for eternity. From the social viewpoint, the notion of God's immanence in all good and noble human effort, by whomsoever it may be undertaken, fosters an infinite social goodwill and tolerance that break down the various boundaries of caste and sect and build up a religious fraternity dedicated to love, service and sharing. In his Śrī-bhāṣya Rāmānuja mentions the following seven sādhanas as aids to the perfection of man and his devotion to God: discrimination (viveka), detachment (vimoka), the practice of meditation (abhyāsa), service (kriyā), the amelioration of fellow-creatures (kalyāṇa), optimism (anavasāda), and non-exaltation (anuddharṣa). Thus Rāmānuja's Vedānta, or knowledge, of Brahman becomes identical with ceaseless striving and sharing. Viśiṣtādvaita is morally earnest, religiously stirring, and socially egalitarian.

Rāmānuja was not only a profound philosopher, but also a spiritual leader of great courage and liberal social outlook. Like Śaṅkara, he made a tour of the North, visiting Banaras, Ayodhyā, Dvārakā, Jagannath and Badarī, and had disputations with the Buddhists, at Banaras and Jagannath. Returning to Śrīraṅgam he divided South India into seventy-four dioceses under lay āchāryas, in order to

propagate the Viśiṣṭādvaita doctrines. Owing to persecution by the Chola emperor he had to live in the Hoysala kingdom for about twenty years, in the course of which he built several irrigation tanks, monasteries and temples, including the temple of Mailcote (Dakṣina Badarikāśrama, north of Seringapatam), which the Pañchamas were privileged to enter once a year to offer their worship. There is a tradition that he brought the image of Rāmapriya (Kṛiṣṇa) with his Muslim bride to Mailcote from Delhi with the assistance of the untouchables. All this is in keeping with his broadmindedness and sense of social justice. His biographers stress that he rose above caste and had non-Brahman disciples, such as Pillai and Urañgavillidāsa. Without provoking social unrest, Vaiṣṇavism was to some extent democratised in the South as a result of Rāmānuja's influence, through the study and dissemination of the Prabandhas in Tamil, the institution of temple festivals, and the permission given to non-Brahmans to adopt the caste marks and habits of life of the Vaiṣṇavas, and to the Pañchamas the right of entry to at least one temple of God.

The Fourth Great Reformation Led by Rāmānanda

Rāmānuja, the leader of the philosophical movement that stressed the reality of the world and the eternal self, as distinct from both the embodied self and the Brahman, was followed by his younger contemporary Nimbārka (who died in about 1162), Madhva (1200–1275), Lokāchārya (1213), and Vedānta Deśika (1268–1369). The year 1300 saw Muslim power spreading gradually to the South, with the usual tale of plunder and ruin. Malik Kafur's expedition to the Deccan, which ended in A.D. 1311, led to the defeat of the Yādava dynasty of Deogiri and the Hoysala dynasty of Mysore, the plunder of the Malabar and Coromandal coasts, the destruction of temples, and the seizure of gold, jewels and women. The philosophers Lokāchārya and Vedānta Deśika themselves had to fly for their lives during Muslim vandalism and massacre. A mosque was built at Adam's bridge; and Śrīrañgam, where so many Vaiṣṇava saints had lived and Rāmānuja taught, was pillaged in 1326.

By A.D. 1300 the whole of India had experienced Muslim devastation and outrage; but that year witnessed in the South the birth of Rāmānanda (*c.* 1299–1410), who initiated in Northern India a socio-religious movement resembling in many respects the Buddhist. It broke down caste barriers and religious ritualism, admitted to

discipleship persons of all classes and communities without distinction, and employed the vernaculars to propagate the faith. We may also refer in this connection to the development of Vīra-Śaivism in the South, founded by Basava, Prime Minister to a Jain king, who renovated the Śaiva cult by infusing into it a vigorous spirit and practical common sense and realism; he stressed the dignity of manual labour and the vocations of life, abolished caste distinctions, and gave equal status to women. Basava founded, in about A.D. 1160, an institution called Śivānubhava-Maṇḍapa, or the House of Spiritual Experience. Both his doctrines and the institution are obviously the reaction of Śaivism to the spread and proselytisation of Islam. But it was neither Basava nor his great elder contemporary, Rāmānuja, but Rāmānanda who initiated what we may call the Fourth Great Reformation, deeper and more far-reaching in its influence on the life of the common man in India than Śaṅkara's Third Reformation. The latter touched only the fringe of the Indian population—the upper intellectual strata, the schools of high philosophy and the seats of Sanskrit learning. The impulsion of the Fourth Great Reformation came from the South to the subjugated and distracted North. A casteless Hindu proselytising movement, which produced some of India's finest mystics and devotees from the lowest castes, was her best rejoinder to Islam, which was effecting conversions by coercion, bribery and the distribution of Muslim food in times of famine, as well as by the preaching of the Muslim saints and divines scattered throughout the length and breadth of the country.

Tiru Mular, who flourished in the Tamil land before the beginning of this millennium, declared that there is one caste and only one God. Nammalvar observed that caste cannot make one high or low; only the knowledge of God can engender that distinction. The Śaiva mystic Pattakiriar longed for the brotherhood of the human race:

'When shall our race be one great brotherhood,
  Unbroken by the tyranny of caste,
Which Kapila in early days withstood,
  And taught that men once were in times once past'.

A mystical orientation of Hindu faiths, a social egalitarian movement, and the development of vernacular literatures: each of these was associated with the teachings of Rāmānanda and Kabīr in Northern India, of Nāmadeva and his successors in Mahārāṣṭra, and of Chaitanya and his disciples in Eastern India. To these movements

Nānak and his successors added in the Punjāb political integration, the welding together of the Sikh community through martyrdom and sacrifice. It is not without significance that when Rāmānanda, the leader of the Fourth Reformation, was going about on pilgrimage through India, starting from Mailcote in Vijayanagara (where more than two centuries before Rāmānuja had thrown open the gates of the temples of Rāmapriya to the Pañchamas), and acquiring the experience among men of different castes and communities that led to his bold departure of admitting degraded classes to full religious equality and to the formation of a creed capable of expressing Hindu and Muslim devotion alike, the kingdom of Vijayanagara was being founded (1336); the sole bulwark of Hindu resistance to Muslim advance in South India for the next three centuries. The socio-religious movement and the political integration were contemporaneous, indubitable proof of the genius and vitality of Hindu culture in the so-called 'dark age' of Indian history.

The Regional and Social Synthesis of Rāmānanda

The Fourth Great Reformation, or socio-religious revolution, gradually spread and influenced the North, from Mahārāṣṭra to Bengal and from the Punjab to Orissa. Rāmānanda, who may be regarded as the fountain-head of most of the religious movements of Northern India till late in the eighteenth century, and who brought into their ambit the common people of the land, should be considered as one of the greatest figures in Indian history and culture. From the South he imbibed the mystical devotion of the Tamil saints and the Viśiṣṭādvaita doctrine of absolute self-surrender (prapatti) and reliance upon God's redemptive love and goodness. But he protested against Southern caste orthodoxy, which would not admit the Śūdras to religious education, let alone to religious equality and brotherhood; for in the discipline of Rāmānuja these ideals were not translated into practice. He also repudiated the barren ceremonialism of the Mīmāṃsā School and the Vedic way of life, which he found to be an anachronism; in the fourteenth century Pārthasārathi Miśra's works on the Karma Mīmāṃsā and Sāyaṇāchārya's commentary on the Vedas aroused great interest. Nor was he much concerned with the conservation of the social order and the regulation of caste, family and marriage, which were being stressed by the famous contemporary Smārtas, such as Mādhvāchārya of Vijayanagara,

Kulluka of Bengal and Chaṇḍeśvara of Mithilā. Buddhism, with its later Tāntrika accretions, had begun its rapid decline, although Rāmānanda is said to have had disputations with the Buddhists at Banaras and Govardhana. He must have seen during his great pilgrimage through the country the ruin and devastation wrought by the Muslims in such holy cities as Mathurā, Prayāga, and Banaras; and also how conversion to the Islamic social democracy must have appealed to the Hindu masses.

Rāmānanda's synthesising genius responded fully to the critical situation of Hindu religion and culture. His basic way of approach was that of Bhakti, the gospel being broadcast among the masses in the vernacular, which replaced Sanskrit as the medium of preaching and discourse. Bhakti in this case was the adoration of Rama, who in Hindu legend and worship did not have the peculiar local and erotic association that Kṛiṣṇa had in the social context of Mathurā and Vṛindāvana, which might not have been acceptable to the Muslims. In fact the rehabilitation of Ramaism, with its exaltation of the noble and righteous life of the Avatāra, god and king among men, played an important role in the reconciliation of Hinduism and Islam. Rāma-rājya, or the Kingdom of the Lord, was the state Rāmānanda sought to establish on earth, on the true foundations of theism, kingship, social equality, strict monogamy and a sturdy discipline of the people.

The Hymns and Songs of Heresy and Equality

The Rāmānandī movement gradually proliferated into three branches. The major branch was Rāmaite, another was Kṛiṣṇaite, and the third, under the leadership of Kabīr and other Nirguṇa Santas, preferred a combination of the Vedantic conception, Advaita or Viśiṣṭādvaita, with the Yoga and meditation on the chakras, etc., of the Nātha and Sahaja traditions, a combination that held greater appeal for Muslim devotees and Hindu outcasts. The teaching and the preaching were transmitted through vernacular hymns and songs, composed in thousands by mystics, saints and poets, including several women. Rāmānanda and his first band of disciples resembled in this respect Luther and his companions, who led the Protestant movement in Europe by preaching and composing hymns in the vernaculars. An ecclesiastic adherent of the Papacy complained in Europe that the people were singing themselves into heresy. In India

the heresy was similarly disseminated far and wide, the various vernaculars being Gujerati, Marathi, Hindi and Bengali. No less significant for the mass movement was the stress laid on social and religious fraternity and on compassion and charity. Social equality and the complete abolition of ancient prejudices in respect of caste and sex were distinctive features of the religious order of Rāmaites or Bairāgis that Rāmānanda founded. One of Rāmānanda's oft-quoted teachings is, 'Let no one ask a man's caste or with whom he eats. If a man shows love to Hari, he is Hari's own'. Men and women of every caste and creed could gain admittance to this ascetic order, and could share their meals as well as pray together. The restitution of the Kingdom of the Lord (Rāma-rājya) on earth rests on certain cardinal social reforms purifying the individual and society, viz., castelessness and repudiation of sacerdotalism in society, monogamy in family life, and the purification of the body and self-surrender to the God of Love and Righteousness in the life of contemplation.

The Outcast Apostles of the Bairāgī Order

According to tradition Bhakti originated in the Draviḍa land; Rāmānanda brought it to the North; and Kabīr spread it to the seven continents and nine divisions of the world. For the first time in Hindu religious history a religious order was established that threw open its doors not only to the twice-born (dvija) but also to the lowest castes, and to women. Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja, Nimbārka and Madhva taught in Sanskrit; Rāmānanda and his band of disciples preached in the vernaculars during their tours in Northern India. The variety of castes from which Rāmānanda's apostles were recruited is noteworthy. There were the cobbler Ravidāsa, the Muslim weaver Kabīr, the barber Sena, the Rajput Pipa, and the Jat peasant Dhanna, and several Brahmans who originally belonged to the Rāmānuja order and left it with Rāmānanda. His first band of apostles probably included also a butcher, Sadna, who made use of the Śāligrāma stone (symbol of Viṣṇu) for weighing meat, a chamār Raidās, and two women, Padmavati Surasuri and the wife of Surasurānanda. Besides these twelve or thirteen first disciples he had several others belonging mainly to the lower castes, including the prostitute Gaṅgā. The important position Rāmānanda assigned to women by designating two of them as his apostles was of the greatest social significance.

The Rise and Spread of Sūfism

The Bhaviṣya Purāṇa remarks that owing to the influence of Rāmānanda many Mlechchhas, or Muslims, had become Vaiṣṇavas, 'with the tulsi rosary on their necks, the name of Rāma on their tongues and the Vaiṣṇava insignia on their foreheads'. They were called saṃyogīs, or 'the re-united', and established themselves near Ayodhya. The Muslim saints and mystics who were going among the masses with their simple monotheism and creed of social and religious equality now found they had effective rivals among the Hindu proselytisers. An intense spiritual consciousness, aroused among both the Hindus and the Muslims, nurtured a new band of Muslim Sūfis on one side and of Hindu Bhaktas, free men of God and lovers of humanity, on the other. The following song composed by Rāmānanda, which is incorporated in the Ādi Granth of the Sikhs, and which seems to be the only one of his to be preserved, reveals a profound similarity between his attitude and that of the Sūfi saints.

'Where shall I go? The music and the festivity are in my own house. My heart does not wish to move. My mind has folded its wings and is still. One day my heart was filled to overflowing, and I had an inclination to go with sandal and other perfumes to offer my worship to Brahman. But the guru (teacher) revealed that Brahman was in my own heart. Wherever I go I see only water and stones (worshipped); but it is Thou who hast filled them all with Thy presence. They all seek Thee in vain among the Vedas. If Thou art not to be found here, we must go and seek Thee there. My own true guru, Thou hast put an end to all my failures and illusions. Blessed art Thou. Rāmānanda is lost in his Master, Brahman. It is the word of the guru that destroys all the million bonds of action'.

The Sūfi movement developed and spread in India in this epoch, acting as a bridge between Hindu and Muslim religious thought and practice. Its springs were varied and complex. Islam had its own mystical way; but its early contact with Christianity, Gnosticism and Neo-platonism, as well as with Hindu Bhāgavatism, were no doubt formative factors in the development of Sūfism. In Persia the Sūfi movement included several celebrated poets, such as Sādi, Rūmī and Hāfiz, who were influenced by Hindu monistic pantheism and developed an artistic religious symbolism and imagery for human-cum-divine love. Sūfi metaphysical notions bear the distinct impress of

Hinduism. Thus the conception of Fanā is derived from the notions of Brahman and Nirvāṇa. The Sūfi utterance 'I am the Truth' echoes the Vedantic dictum 'Thou art That' (Tat tvamasi). The Sūfis borrowed also Hindu Yogic breathing exercises (Pasi anfas), methods of meditation, and the repetition of mantra (zikar). The development of Sūfism in India is usually associated with the foundation of the Chisti order in 1193 by Muinuddin Chisti (1142–1236) in Delhi, and of the Suhrawardi order by Bahauddin Zakriya Multani (1169–1266) in Multan.

The Intermingling of Bhakti and Sūfī Doctrines and Practices

It was after the Bhakti movement had spread far and wide in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries that the Sūfi faith was transformed and popularised by borrowings from mystical devotionalism and the Nātha and Sahaja yoga traditions; and at the same time it influenced several Hindu dissenting sects. Three important Sūfistic orders were founded in the fifteenth century, the Madari or Uwaysi order by Badiuddin Shah Madar of Makanpur, U.P. (died 1436), the Qadri order by Muhammad Gilani of Uch (1482–1517), and the Naqashbandi order by Muhammad Baqi Billah of Delhi (died 1803), which attracted a large number of Muslims and converts. There was a considerable interchange of spiritual love imagery and meditative practices among the various Hindu sects and Sūfistic orders, especially in the period of Mughal religious toleration from Babar to Akbar, which encouraged a good deal of cultural and religious accommodation and compromise. Sūfism was also introduced into Indian literature by such famous romantic Muslim writers in Hindu as Mulla Daud (*c.* 1440), Kutban (*c.* 1500), Mañjhan, Jāyasī (1540), and Usman (1613). It was these 'romantics' who brought the passion and symbolism of Majnu and Laila's love and desolation into Indian poetry and religion. Kabīr's association with the Sūfi faqirs was a contributory factor in the adoption and subsequent popularity of the Persian love symbolism as the mode of approach to the Divine.

The Indian variety of Sūfism was moulded by the intimate contact of the Muslim saints both with the Yoga asceticism of the Nātha and Sahaja traditions and with the dominating intense love of the personal deity of the Vaiṣṇava sect, which went back to ancient Bhāgavatism. As the Muslim power gradually consolidated itself, the even tenor of the life of the common people was left undisturbed.

Conversions to Islam became common among the lower social strata owing to caste disabilities and other social handicaps, and to the prospect of exemption from the jiziya, from distress during famines, and from enslavement during wars. But this did not seriously disturb the social fabric; for the converts avoided beef-eating and the remarriage of widows and generally conformed to the Hindu way of living. The Hindu population paid their homage to Muslim faquirs and saints, went on pilgrimage to the tombs of pīrs, and worshipped with the Muslims at common shrines to avert epidemic disease or agricultural calamity, disasters that affected Hindus and Muslims equally in the villages. Both Hindu and Muslim orthodoxy no doubt looked askance at these practices; but the dissenting spirits of both religions, the Hindu Bhaktas and Bairāgīs and the Muslim Sūfis and Faquirs, took upon themselves the task of breaking down barriers of caste and religion, and preaching an intense love of God that transcended the race limits within which Hinduism and Islam were virtually confined. The Sūfi doctrines of Islam and the Bhakti doctrines of Hinduism thus mingled harmoniously on Indian soil.

Just as it is impossible to trace in the Adina mosque at Pandua, the Taj Mahal at Agra, the Sona Masjid and the Qadam Rasul at Gaur, and the Hindola and Jahaz Mahals at Mandu what is Hindu and what is Muslim art and craftsmanship, so too it is impossible to distinguish between the Hindu and Muslim elements in the hymns of such Hindu saints as Rāmānanda, Kabīr, Nānak, Dādū and Mīrābāi, and such Sūfis as Sachal, Shah Latif and Guru Arjuna. It is the religious dissenters of the middle ages, Bhaktas and Sūfis, who through their eclectic teachings and devotional ecstasies have largely fashioned the religious faith and devotion of modern India. A reliable estimate is that two thirds of the Indian Muslims are under the influence of one or other of the Sūfi orders. The outer shell of religion divides sects and communities: Sūfism and Bhakti, on the other hand, which constitute the mystical core or essence of Islam and Hinduism, have been firm and essential binders of the two cultures through the chequered course of their political relations.

The Eclectic Teachings of Kabīr, Dādū and Nānak

Three famous eclectic figures shine in Indian religious history, viz., Kabīr, Dādū and Nānak, all belonging to the Rāmānandī tradition; they boldly sought to fuse Hinduism and Islam, and obtained a vast

following among the masses of both the Hindu and Muslim population. All three equally attempted to purge faith of superstition and ritual. In Kabīr (1410–1518) the Rāmānandī, the Gorakhnāthī and Sūfī traditions mingled in the making of a tolerant, eclectic and profound spirit, who held all institutional religion to be an empty show, strongly denounced caste, sectarianism, penance and forms of observance and sought the Reality by direct mystical intuition (Sahaja): 'God is in every man's heart if the truth be known'. 'The Mussalman's is one God, whereas Kabīr's is all-pervading'. Kabīr thus differs from the orthodox monotheism of Islam. He writes:

'O servant, where dost thou seek Me?
Lo, I am beside Thee.
I am neither in temple nor in mosque;
I am neither in Kaaba nor in Kailāśa;
Neither am I in rites and ceremonies, nor in Yoga or
renunciation.
If thou art a true seeker, thou shalt seek Me at once;
Thou shalt meet Me in a moment of time'.

Dādū (1544–1600), the saint of Ahmedabad, was a cotton-weaver by caste and a Kabīr-pānthī. He travelled widely in Northern India, meeting the Emperor Akbar on one occasion. In him profound mystical insight and poetic vision blended harmoniously to produce some of the most precious gems of the world's religious poetry. It is noteworthy that he could compose in Hindi, Sindhi, Gujerati, Marwari, Marathi and Persian. He cries:

'Maiden, hearken to the tale of my agony!
I am restless without my Beloved.
As the fish tosses about without water,
I find no repose without my Beloved.
In my yearning desire for my Beloved, I break into song
day and night; I pour out my woes like a singing bird.
Alas! Who will bring me to my Beloved?
Who will show me His path and console my heart?
Dādū cries: O Lord, let me see Thy face even for a
moment and be blessed!'

Nānak (1469–1538) was the founder of Sikhism in the Punjāb. He seems to have met Kabīr when he was only twenty-seven, and was familiar with his hymns, which are still sung by the Sikhs daily. All

his life he valiantly sought to purge Hinduism and Islam of their bigotry, superstition and formalism. He laid as much emphasis on the one-ness of God as Truth (Sat-śri Akāla—God is True) and of the fraternity of men, as on noble and righteous living—the social virtues of dignity of labour, charity, and sharing. His indictment of form and ritual at the cost of inwardness is apparent in the following hymns addressed to a Muslim:

> 'Make kindness thy Mosque, sincerity thy prayer-carpet,
> What is just and lawful thy Quran,
> Modesty thy circumcision, civility thy fasting;
> So shalt thou be a Mussalman.

There are five prayers, five times for prayer, and five names for them:

> The first should be truth, the second what is right,
> the third charity in God's name,
> The fourth good intentions, the fifth the praise and
> glory of God'.

The profound love and devotion he inspired among Hindus and Muslims alike is revealed by their disputing after his death whether he should be cremated or buried. But as in the case of Kabīr, the corpse vanished, and in its place there were only fresh flowers.

The Modification of Islamic Theism

In the teachings of Kabīr, Dādū and Nānak, we find on the one hand the breaking down of the austerity and impersonality of Islamic theism, and on the other a vehement protest against Hindu sacerdotalism, polytheism and caste, encouraging the fusion of the two communities. Equally significantly, both Kabīr and Nānak came into direct contact with the Gorakhnāth tradition and also drank deep from the undefiled wells of the Sūfī movement. We here encounter the ancient essential spirit of Hinduism, tolerant and catholic, always seeking to establish the most unlimited extension of the religious community; not a spirit of defeatism in the face of the foreign conqueror and his proselytisation.

The Bhakti movement came from the Tamil land to the North through the Great Reformation of Rāmānanda and gradually

spread in the course of the fourteenth century, during his lifetime, and in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. In its original home in the South devotional mysticism never became anything like a mass movement of social and religious freedom and equality, promoting dignity of action without distinction of caste and status, and bringing in its wake a phenomenal development of popular literature, as it did in the North. This was because, under the glorious aegis of the Vijayanagara Empire, the South was more or less immune from Muslim aggression and the disintegrating influence of Islam. In the North, however, Bhakti was not an expression of national defeatism or escapism but a great democratic upsurge, an awakening of dynamic religious life; not only was it able to meet effectively the religious and social challenge of Islam, but it also strengthened the dissenting creed of Sūfism within the bosom of Islam by modifying its uncompromising monotheism and racialism.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE ECLECTICISM AND HUMANISM OF MUGHAL CULTURE AND ART

Islamic Culture in the Provincial Towns

THE Turko-Afghan invaders were the first to plant the banner of the Crescent on Indian soil. Some of their rulers at Delhi were enlightened despots, and some ruthless tyrants; but all were religious bigots and iconoclasts. Under the Turko-Afghan regime many Hindu temples and Buddhist monasteries were razed to the ground. Even at its height, however, Delhi did not represent the true culture of Islam in India. During the reign of the Tughluqs, as its authority markedly declined in the face of Hindu resistance, the centre of Islamic civilization migrated from Delhi to Jaunpur, Gaur, Ahmedabad and Mandu in the fifteenth century. In these various Muslim kingdoms, there was a great revival of art, architecture and learning, based on a synthesis of Hindu tradition and Muslim culture. This was possible because the Afghans, in spite of their iconoclastic zeal, were no strangers to the Indian life, Gandhāra having formed an integral part of various Indian empires in different epochs.

The Blending of Saracenic and Hindu Traditions in Architecture

In Delhi, the architecture of the Slave and Khilji periods, in such buildings as the famous Qutb Minar, the Jamaat Khana Masjid, the Nizamuddin Auliya Dargah and the Alai Darwaza, reveals a predominance of Islamic influences. Yet we find Hindu art motifs, temple bells and chains, on the massive pillars of the Qutb mosque, and its screen of arches also bears Hindu influences. The earliest Muslim city of India, the first among the seven Muslim cities of Delhi, shows an unmistakable intermixture of Hindu and Saracenic tradi-

tions and techniques in art and architecture. But in the provinces the blend was surer, more discriminating and more creative; and regional styles bear the impress of Indian genius rather than foreign influence. This has been stressed by Sir John Marshall, who traces the development in the Turko-Afghan period of new 'Indian' styles of architecture which are distinct in every region, such as Bengal, Bijapur, Gujarat and Malwa. 'At Jaunpur and in the Deccan', he observes, 'the local styles enjoyed greater ascendancy, while in Bengal the conquerors not only adopted the fashion of building in brick, but adorned their structures with chiselled and moulded enrichments frankly imitated from Hindu prototypes'. So, too, in Western India they appropriated almost without modification the beautiful Gujarat style, which has yielded some of the finest buildings of medieval India; and in Kashmir they did the same with the striking wooden architecture, which must have long been prevalent in that part of the Himalayas. The Adina Masjid built at Pandua, and the Sona Masjid and the Qadam Rasul at Gaur, the Jami Masjid in Ahmedabad, and the Hindola and Jahaz Mahals in Mandu are some of the best specimens of Indian architecture, characterised by a judicious blending of grandeur and massiveness of structural form, derived from Islamic influence, with the beauty, finish, and refinement of Hindu decorative motifs and designs; the two being skilfully dovetailed by Hindu architects and craftsmen. The dome of the mosque becomes characteristically Hindu, descended from the ancient Buddhist stūpa and Dravidian temple, while the ground-plan echoes the symbolic Hindu scheme of pañcha-ratna. The decoration of the pillars and capitals of the mosque with flower petals and tendrils also shows a characteristic blend of Persian and Hindu art motifs. The Hindu style of architecture gradually won its freedom and creative initiative in Rajputana and Central India from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century, revealing at once a remarkable harmony of massiveness and linearism in structure and delicacy and romantic fervour in ornamentation. Hanging balconies, latticed windows, projecting cornices or eaves, airy pavilions and gilded cupolas in huge forts and palaces with lofty ramparts, set against a background of jagged hills, from Bikaner and Amber to Gwalior and Datia, symbolise the romantic and adventurous spirit of the Rajput race.

The Inauguration of the 'Hindustani' Phase

In the kingdom of Gaur, under the Iliyas Shah dynasty, there was a good deal of amity and co-operation between the Muslim rulers and their Hindu subjects, which had a marked effect on both the administration and the general tenor of social life. Hindus were appointed to the highest offices of state by Sultan Husain Shah. Like Rupa and Sanatan in Bengal, there was Medini Rai in Malwa, appointed by the Muslim ruler. In the Muslim states of Bijapur and Golkunda, too, Hindus held the highest positions. Marriages between Hindus and Muslims of the ruling strata were not unknown in this period, and they promoted the mingling of the divergent cultures. The climax of this intermingling and the inauguration of a liberal, pro-Hindu policy was reached in Bengal, when Adil Shah Sur selected his chief minister and commander, Himu, a Hindu, to lead the national resistance against the Mughals in A.D. 1556. It was in this social climate of Hindu and Moslem rapprochement that literature and the fine arts progressed rapidly towards the distinct 'Hindustani' phase in Northern India. In Gaur several translations of the Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata from Sanskrit into Bengali were undertaken at the instance of the Sultans, who engaged scholars for this purpose. Mention may be made of the translations of the Mahābhārata produced under the patronage of Sultan Nusrat Shah, Paragal Khan, general to Sultan Hussain Shah, and Chuti Khan, Governor of Chittagong. Similarly, the Bhāgavata was translated from Sanskrit into Bengali at the instance of Sultan Hussain Shah. The well-known Bengali version of the Rāmāyaṇa by Krittivāsa, which is read widely even today, was produced under the patronage of 'a king of Gaur'.

The Fusion of Persian and Sanskrit Themes and Techniques in Vernacular Literature: Amir Khrusrau, the Parrot of India

Babar, the founder of the Mughal dynasty in Delhi, characterised the contemporary Hindu-Muslim rapprochement in literature, architecture, music, dress and manners as 'the Hindustani mode'. Its famous harbinger in literature in the fourteenth century was Amir Khusrau, who was called 'the parrot of India' by Alauddin Khilji. He was born in Patiala, his father being a Turk and his mother a Rajput (Pawal). He wrote in Persian, Hindi and Urdu;

Urdu meaning literally the 'camp dialect', which combines Hindi and Persian. Among Khusrau's many romances the most successful was that in which he utilised, not the Persian stories that were so superbly used by Nizami, but Indian legends. This was the Hasht Bihisht, or the Eight Paradises, in which his plan was novel, at least for Persian literature. His Hindi poetry consisted largely of stray songs, dohas and ghazals (with alternate Persian and Hindi lines) transmitted from mouth to mouth. The ghazals of Khusrau have deservedly won him immortality; they were appreciated by both Sadi and Hafiz, and were widely imitated throughout Asia. Below is a translation of one of these charming poems, which sings of the emptiness of the world and the evanescence of youth:

'Thou takest life out of our clay
And yet within our hearts dost live;
Inflicting on us pang on pang,
Dost yet a palliative give.

Thy flashing sword has laid all waste
The troubled garden of my heart;
Yet what a glory to this wreck
The rays of Thy great throne impart.

'The two vain empty worlds', they say,
'Is the price that all must pay for Thee'.
Raise up the value, raise the cost,
This is too cheap—as all can see.

From the vain tenement of clay
My soul one day shall freedom find;
And yet my heart for ever shall
Remain with Thy great love entwined.

Khusrau! Thy grey locks and old age
Sort not with love for idols young;
And yet for such a senseless quest
Thou hast thy soul for ever flung'.
(Translated by M. W. Mirza)

Khusrau's poems on the various seasons of India follow a theme familiar in Sanskrit kāvya; but he gave them piquancy, naturalness and freshness by drawing upon the dialects used by the common

people, and to-day, even after a lapse of centuries, his songs are still sung in the villages of Northern India. Here is one of his superb Hindi dohas, said to have been recited at the death of his preceptor, the famous Sūfi Nizamuddin Aulia: 'The fair one lies on her couch, with her black tresses scattered over her face: O Khusrau, come home now, for night has fallen all over the world'.

Muhammad Jāyasī, the Sūfī Romantic

If Urdu owes its origin to Amir Khusrau, who devoted his long creative life to productions in that language, besides Persian and Hindi, Hindi romantic poetry perhaps owes its beginning to one of his contemporaries, Mulla Daud (about A.D. 1400), the author of Lurak aur Chandā kī Kahānī. Several Muslim poets followed up the Hindi romantic tradition, including Kutban, author of the Mṛigāvatī (A.D. 1500), Manjhan, author of the Madhumālatī, Usman, author of the Chitrāvali, and Jāyasī who lived at the time of Humayun and was the author of the Padmāvata. The dominant theme of this romantic movement in Hindi literature, in which Muslim writers played such a leading part, was the intermingling of human and divine affection in the ceaseless adventure of the love-intoxicated soul which defies social conventions. This literary movement merged with the later mystical-philosophical movement of Sūfism under the influence of the Hindu philosophy of life. The leading figure among these Muslim poets was Malik Muhammad Jāyasī, who was born in 1494 and spent the latter part of his life in the seclusion of the Ramnagar jungle, at Amethi in Oudh. He was an early exponent of both Hindi literature and Hindu-Muslim cultural amity; his epic on the life of the Rajput heroine Padmāvatī (1540) reveals a harmonious blend of ancient Hindu Yoga and medieval Sūfi mysticism. He was profoundly influenced by the teaching of Kabīr (1410–1518), whom he mentions in the Akhrāwaṭ, stanza 43, and is traditionally regarded as a Sūfi poet. At the same time he gives abundant evidence of his familiarity with the Gorakhnāthī yoga tradition. He undoubtedly takes an honourable place as one of the first and brightest of that shining galaxy of saints and poets of the middle ages who would be called neither specifically Hindu nor specifically Muslim; and who brought about that religious syncretism which reached its culmination at the time of Akbar.

Jāyasi's profound indebtedness to Upaniṣadic thought is evident

in the following extract from his Preface, which expresses at once God's immanence and transcendence:

'The Lord hath no life, and yet He liveth;
He hath no hands, and yet He maketh all things;
He hath no tongue, yet He telleth everything;
He hath no bodily form, yet that which He shaketh, is shaken.
Ears hath He not, yet heareth He all things;
Heart hath he not, yet the Wise One discriminates all things;
He hath no eyes, yet all both He see:
How can any one discern as He doth?'

Yet Jāyasī, in Sūfi fashion, speaks of human and divine love merging into each other. 'He who is wounded by the words of love (viraha), what is hunger and what is delusion to him? He changeth his appearance and becometh a hermit, like a jewel covered and hidden in the dust'. 'The body possessed by love hath neither blood nor flesh'. Love is regarded as a doorway leading to the yogi's emancipation, as in the classical instances of love in India: Bikram (Vikramāditya) and Sapnāvati (Champāvatī), Madhupāchha and Mugudhāvati, Raj Kunwar and Mṛigāvati, Khanadāvat and Madhumālati, Sursarī and Premāvati, and Anirudh (Aniruddha) and Uṣā. The poet also speaks of such deep love as that of the moth, which embraces the lamp flame with its lips, and of the bee, which does not see the thorn of the ketakī flower. Like Laila in Persian romance, the lover in Jāyasī is burnt by love's distress and becomes a heap of ashes. He grasps the Piṅgalā and Suṣumnā Nāḍis of Hindu yogic contemplation (derived by the poet-mystic from the tradition of Gorakhnāth, whose shrine he reveres as that of a spiritual preceptor par excellence, one who gives his disciples a new incarnation and a new body), and his gaze becomes absorbed in vacant contemplation. 'The man of love is like a drop of water that is mingled in the ocean. He is lost and cannot be found by seeking'. All this is Persian and Sūfi romanticism dovetailed into the Hindu philosophy of life.

In its literary style the Padmāvata of Jāyasī, like its predecessors, the Mṛigāvatī of Kutban and the Madhumālatī of Mañjhan, combines the passion and idealism of Persian classical literature with the discipline and restraint of the Hindu Charita kāvyas. These works achieved, therefore, in literary treatment, a fusion of Sanskrit and Persian themes, techniques and motifs, and in religious context, an integration of the universal mystical elements of Hinduism and

Islam. Such is the basis and background from which modern literature sprang—the exhilarating cup of strong, naïve emotions from which Hindus and Muslims alike drank deep—Urdu proceeding from Amir Khusrau and Hindi from Jāyasī; but both embodying the same fervent, deep-rooted synthesis of ideas and feelings.

The New Conception of a Tolerant Secular State

In the sixteenth century the iconoclastic spirit of the Muslim jehad, which had helped to bring about the rapid subjugation of India by the Turko-Afghan military adventurers, was largely tempered by political expediency. In the medieval Muslim kingdoms of South India and Bengal, the notion of a composite Hindu-Muslim state developed, and the interests of Islam ceased to be identified with those of the state. The 'balance of power' between Hindu and Muslim kingdoms was also cemented by alliances, sometimes firm, sometimes shifting, between Muslim and Hindu rulers. The power of the Vijayanagara empire (1336-1614) induced the Muslim Bahmani kingdom and its successor, the Shahi kingdom, to follow a policy of religious toleration and cultural co-operation, which set indeed the model for the Mughal Empire of Northern India. The Mongols or Mughals came to India in the first quarter of the sixteenth century, after their conquest of Iran, where they had themselves been conquered by the refinement and finish of Iranian culture. Their rulers adopted the title Pādshāhas-i-Hind, clearly indicating the mission of the Timurids in Hindustan.

The conception of a tolerant, secular state, also entertained by the forerunners of the Great Mughals, the dynasty of Chengiz Khan and and Kubla Khan, not only helped to build up a national monarchy in Hindustan but also promoted a synthesis of Hindu and Muslim cultures. From Babur (1526–1530) to Akbar (1556–1605) there was a gradual expansion and consolidation of Mughal authority from Delhi, based on alliances and matrimonial connections with the Rajputs, those implacable enemies of foreign rule and lovers of freedom, the appointment of Hindu rulers of states as grandees, the employment of Hindus in the highest offices of State, and the general conciliation of the Hindus. Babur in his will to his son, Humayun, stressed the need for religious toleration. The building up of new loyalties immediately bore fruit for the infant national state in Hindustan; for Akbar's half-brother, who ruled over Kabul and invaded India,

could be defeated only with the help of the Great Mughal's new allies, the Rajputs.

Akbar's liberal policy was appreciated by Śivājī, the inveterate enemy of the Mughals, in a famous letter he addressed to Aurangzeb protesting against the re-imposition of the jizya, which had been abolished by Akbar. Śivājī reminded Aurangzeb that the latter's officers 'neglected to tell him the true state of things; but covered a blazing fire with straw'.

It is true that Akbar's ideal of a national state could be implemented for a century only. Aurangzeb (1658–1707) completely reversed his policy, and sought to build a purely Muslim state ruled by the Koran. It is noteworthy that he added to his titles of Pādshāh (Emperor) and Alamgir (conqueror of the world) the title of Ghazi (Holy warrior) as soon as he ascended the throne. But even before Aurangzeb both Jahangir and Shah Jahan were neither sincere nor consistent in maintaining the national character of the Mughal kingdom as envisaged by Akbar.

The Eclectic Spirit of Akbar's Din-i-Ilahi

Akbar was somewhat of a mystic, having experienced sudden outbursts of deep and strange spiritual emotions and attitudes. He obtained his early familiarity with Sūfism from Sheikh Mubarak, Mir Abdul Latif and Faizi, and later on from the well-known saint Salim Chisti. He is also said to have visited the famous Mīrā Bāī of Mewar and the Sikh Guru Amar Das of the Punjāb. He acquainted himself with the secret of Yoga and devotion through three eminent Jain teachers, Harivijaya Suri, Vijaya Sen Suri, and Bhanu Chandra Upadhya; and he also had intimate contact with the Parsi teachers Dastur and Kaivan and the Jesuit Fathers Aquaviva and Monserrate from Goa. Imbibing the spirit of the Upanisads, the Mahābhārata and the Bhagavad Gītā (translated by his order under the title Razm Namah), and the mystical poetry of Kabīr, Mī ā Bāī, Sūrdās and Tulsidās, and frequently meeting Hindu saints and Muslim faqirs in the gentle, religious atmosphere of their cottages and asramas, Akbar reiterated from Fatehpur-Sikrī the eclectic religious lesson of India of his time. This was called the Din-i-Ilahi, which was a Sūfi fraternity rather than an independent church, and was to 'prescribe for the whole empire gods, ceremonies, sacrifices, mysteries, rules, solemnities and whatever was required to constitute one perfect

and universal religion'. It was in entire accord with the synthesis reached through several centuries of development of the Hindu Bhakti movement and Muslim Sūfism. True to this fundamental spirit of eclecticism, the Emperor peremptorily asked the Christian missionaries to refrain from attacks on Muhammad's life and teachings; though he permitted them to build a chapel, attended their Mass, had the Gospel translated into Persian, and on the great gateway at Fatehpur-Sikrī inscribed Christ's words:

> 'Jesus saith, the world is a bridge; pass over it, but build not on it.
> The world passeth as an hour; spend it in prayer, for the unseen is at hand'.

To his own Muslim brethren he said:

'To repeat the words of the creed, to perform the circumcision, or to lie prostrate on the ground from dread of kingly power is not seeking God. Obedience is not in prostration in the dust. Practise truth; for sincerity is not borne on the brow'. This is an echo of the teaching of Kabīr, Dādū and Nānak.

The Din-i-Ilahi had no priesthood and was confined to the select few, called chelas, who were, in Sūfi manner, strictly and carefully chosen by Akbar after a 'cleaning search'. Tajuddin formulated the external observances of the creed, while Abul Fazl and Faizi were its mujtahids. It was built up from the essential elements of all the religions in India at the time. 'We ought therefore to bring them all into one, but in such a fashion that they should be both 'one and all'; with the great advantage of not losing what is good in one religion, while gaining what is even better in another. In this way honour would be rendered to God, peace would be given to the peoples, and security to the empire'. Orthodox Muslims cavilled at it however, and Abul Fazl, who observed their resentment, gave the following reasons for it:

'An impure faction reproached the caravan leader of God-knowers with being of the Hindu (Brahman) religion. The ground for this improper notion was that the prince, out of his wide tolerance, received Hindu sages into his intimacy, increased for administrative reasons the rank of Hindus, and for the good of the country showed them kindness. Three things supported the evil-minded gossips. Firstly, the sages of different religions assembled at court and, as every religion has some good in it, each received some praise. From a spirit of justice, the badness of any sect could not weave a veil over its merits. Second, the principle of Peace with all (Sulh-i-kul) was

honoured at the court of the Caliphates, and various tribes of mankind of diverse natures obtained spiritual and material success'.

Akbar (1556–1605), the Great Mughal, and Dara Shukoh, the prince-philosopher of Delhi and Agra (died 1659), Tulsīdās (1532–1623), the author of the Rāmacharita Mānasa, and Nābhā Dās, the author of the Bhaktamāla (about 1600), of Northern India; Chaitanya (1485–1533), the God-intoxicated preacher, Mukundarāma, the author of the Chaṇḍī Maṅgala (composed between 1593–1603), and Kaśīrām Dās, the author of the Mahābhārata (composed about 1603), of Bengal; and Bullah Shah, the poet-mystic of the Punjab, were the representative master minds through whom the religious synthesis, castelessness and egalitarianism of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries obtained their noblest expression.

Dara's 'Mingling of the Two Oceans'

Dara Shukoh was certainly the most learned man of his age in India and one of her greatest scholars, while as a prince he had in him the making of an Aśkoa, Harṣa or Akbar. He belonged to the Qadriya sect, founded by Abdul Qadir Gilani, which had a liberal creed promising illumination for the faithful as well as for infidels, and which followed a whole host of contemplative practices. He wrote a number of religious works that bear testimony not merely to his religious eclecticism but also to the high level of mystical experience that he was capable of reaching. In these he uses the common phraseology of Muslim Sūfism and Hindu Yoga. He came into intimate contact with several Hindu saints, such as Charan Das of Alwar, Babu Lal of Sirhind, and Kavīndra of Banaras. He acquired proficiency in Arabic, Persian, Sanskrit and Hindi, and studied in translations the Hebrew and Christian scriptures. He himself translated the various Upaniṣads, preferring to render into Persian the commentary of Śaṅkara; and under his direction the Bhāgavad Gītā, the Yoga Vāśiṣṭha, and the Prabodha Chandrodaya were also translated. The title of his work, the Majma-ul-Bahrain, or the Mingling of the Two Oceans, symbolises the reconciliation and synthesis of the broad cultural currents of Islam and India, which cruel fate prevented him from fostering by imperial edicts. It is indeed one of the mockeries of history that the political destiny of India passed into the hands of the bigoted Aurangzeb, to result in a futile, unhappy and war-worn century, instead of into those of the

mystic prince and legitimate heir, Dara, whose regime might have continued the legacy of Akbar, consolidated the union between Hinduism and Islam on the basis of religious give-and-take, and brought about lasting peace between the two communities of Hindustan.

Both Akbar's liberalism and toleration, his Sulh-i-kul, which ultimately led to the bold formulations of the Din-i-Ilahi, with its obvious political aims, and Dara's sincere and spontaneous endeavour to reach the highest realisation of unrevealed truth through the common mystic way of the Sūfi Arif and the Hindu Bhakta, were the direct outcome of the contemporary ferment caused by the dissident movements in the bosom of Hinduism, as represented by the various Bhakti schools and sects, and of Islam, as represented by Sūfism, Mahdism and Roshnism, all of which promoted religious freedom and equality for the masses of India.

The Humanism and Freedom of the Rāmacharita Mānasa and the Bhaktamāla

In the celebrated poet Tulsīdās (1532–1623) we find a great humanist and universalist, whose epic, the Rāmacharita Mānasa, read to-day by more than a hundred million people in Northern India, achieved a remarkable fresh synthesis in popular Hinduism, of knowledge and devotionalism, worship and meditation, moral earnestness and spiritual insight, which has saved India from many schisms and sects. As the Ramlīlā, said to have been introduced by Tulsīdās himself at Kāśī, it is enacted in many a town and village on its open ground. The Rāmacharita Mānasa superbly blends the philosophical monism of the past with the contemporary stress on Bhakti, the poetry and dignity of Vālmiki's Rāmāyana with the devotional fervour and humanism of the Śrīmad Bhāgavata. On the whole, however, the spirit of compassion and Bhakti, of service to man and reverence for the deity, characteristic of the Bhāgavata tradition, which had been handed down by the Rāmānandī order, is the dominant note of the epic. Tulasīdās belonged to the Rāmānandī order and had as his spiritual teacher Narahari, sixth in descent from Rāmānanda. While the Rāmacharita Mānasa contains a poignant sense of the burden of sin, which can be removed only by the divine grace, stress is laid on the sanctity of the human role, of the worthiness of the human body; for the Lord himself wants to assume human form. 'There is no form like

the form of a man, a form which all creatures, moving and unmoved, most earnestly desire. It is the ladder to hell and heaven and final liberation, and grants its wearer the blessings of wisdom, detachment and faith. Those who put on this body and yet worship not Hari but devote themselves to the very lowest of sensual lusts are throwing away from their hands the philosopher's stone to grasp instead fragments of common glass'. Neither superiority of caste nor show of Śāstric learning but inner spirituality and goodness assure the Divine favours. Nowhere is this more poignantly stressed by Tulsidās than in the episode of Śavarī, and Rāmāchandra's sojourn among the Kirātas and Bhīls. One of the poem's fine legends, fully expressing the contemporary humanistic spirit, concerns a wretched scavenger, in the grip of a loathsome disease, who lay in filth crying, 'Ah, Rāma, Rāma'. Hanuman, flying by, angrily kicked the sufferer on the breast. That night, as he shampooed the God's body, he was horrified to find a dreadful wound in the same place. How had it happened? 'You kicked a poor man on the breast', explained Rāma, 'as he called upon my name; and what you did to the vilest of my children, you did to me'.

But the twin concepts of the divinity of man and the humanity of God, characteristic of the mystical movements of the time, have never been more nobly and ardently expressed than in the Bhaktamāla (about A.D. 1600) of Nābhā Dās, one of Tulsīdās's great contemporaries. This compendium of mystical experiences is full of stories and legends relating to Bhaktas, poets and saints, and has remained a perennial source of religious inspiration to millions in Northern India. The characters of the Bhaktamāla are sweet, attractive, angelic, and free; they are the heroes and heroines of Bhakti in all its phases and nuances. There is the queen poet Mīrā Bāī of Mewar, who abandoned her palace because she could not bear the sight of animal sacrifices, and who wandered from hill to forest, restless with the fever of separation from the blue-complexioned Lord. There is another queen, Ganeśa Derānī of Orchha, who suffered in silence the agony of a wound inflicted by a mad ascetic, lest her husband should wreak vengeance. There are the penitent Indian, Magdalenes; the dancing girl, Kanhopriyā of Pandharpur, who became intoxicated with the love of Vīthovā, and ultimately preferred death to ravishment by the profligate king of Bedar; and the fair courtesan of Delhi, who dedicated the only art she knew, her dancing, to the love of God. There is also Surasurī, whose chastity was protected by a tiger who scared away ruffians in the forest;

the passionate Bilvamaṅgala, who swam across a dark flood on a stormy night to meet the woman he loved, and who, on being rejected by her, turned inwards, and plucked out his offending eyes to eradicate his lust; and the nameless king who cut off his right hand for a similar reason.

The Chaitanya Vaiṣṇava Movement

The Rāmachārita Mānasa and the Bhaktamāla were produced in Middle India. In the north the Grantha Sahib of Nānak (1469–1538), the first Sikh Guru, was fashioning the character of the Punjāb peasantry, whose suffering, service and sacrifice were preparing them for their future martyrdom. In the east and the south-east there was the brilliant, God-intoxicated Chaitanya (1485–1533), who utilised the contemporary doctrines of Bhakti, recently enriched by the popularisation of the Śrīmad Bhāgavata from the South and the cult of Kṛiṣṇa-Rādhā of Vṛindāvan, for the religious and social awakening of the masses. Round him gathered a unique band of devoted philosophers, poets and scholars. They developed, largely on the basis of their beloved master's spiritual ecstasies, an entire psychology, metaphysics and aesthetics of bhakti, which stimulated a literary and religious renaissance in Bengal, Orissa and Assam for more than two centuries. The Chaitanya Vaiṣṇava movement added a new strand of morality and goodness to the Indian character; the maturing, and the transcendent quality of authentic human affections and attachments were conceived as symbolic of the approach to the deity. One of the most authoritative texts is the Chaitanya Charitāmṛita, composed at Vṛindāvan between 1607 and 1615 by Krishnadas Kavirāja. While Chaitanyism promoted the ideal of a casteless society and ritual-free worship and abolished many social barriers, by stressing humility, fortitude and self-surrender, it had a profound influence in shaping human character. The ideal of human perfection is pictured as a blend of 'the humbleness of the grasses, the fortitude of the trees, self-abasement for the sake of fellow-men and constant remembrance of God's name'.

In Eastern India, owing to the entrenchment of decadent Buddhism and its absorption by many popular Hindu cults, the movement led by Chaitanya's disciple Nityānanda, who admitted into his order thousands of degraded Buddhist monks and nuns, was part of a broader movement of eclecticism. This was represented by

the cults of Dharma Thakur, Maṅgala Chaṇḍi, Manasā, Kālikā and Sashtī, all metamorphoses of Mahāyāna deities. Such folk-cults provided a place for derelict Buddhism and its degraded votaries within the bosom of popular Hinduism, and at the same time stimulated the development of Bengali literature, filling the gap left by the eclipse of orthodox Brāhmanical culture after the Muslim conquest. Remnants of the now-forgotten Buddhism are the Varṇa-Brāhmans, described by Mukundarāma as 'men of the monastery or bhikṣus', and the Yugis and Dharmagharia Yogis of South-west Bengal. For the first time in Indian literature the heroes and heroines of these new cults, vigorous, enterprising and pious, came from the lowest and the least in society. Mukundarāma's Chaṇḍi Maṅgala Kāvya and Ghanarāma Chakravarty's Dharma Maṅgala Kāvya have for generations profoundly influenced the popular Hindu mind, leavened by the impact of both Buddhism and Islam in Eastern India.

In the Dharma Maṅgala Kāvya, stemming from Ramai Pandit (probably thirteenth century), Khelārāma, Mayūrabhaṭṭa (1528), Ruparāma (middle of the seventeenth century), and Manikrām Ganguli, we find another notable attempt to unify Hindu and Muslim worship, anticipating the eclectic Satyanārāyaṇa cult and Pāñchali by some centuries in Bengal. Of greater influence on the popular mind was Kāśīrama Dās's Pāṇḍava Vijaya or Bhārata-Pāñchāli, a version of the Mahābhārata that was completed in 1603. It combines ardent devotionalism with poetic imagery and dramatic insight, and like Tulsidas's work it is a source of perennial delight and inspiration. The virtues of Bengal homes and cottages here eclipse those of the princes and warriors of Ayodhya and Hastināpur, with the result that no humble dwelling fails to obtain joy, strength and solace from this Mahābhārata in Eastern India.

The Mystical Poetry of the Punjab

In the north, Shah Inayat (died 1735), one of the most influential and progressive Sūfis of Northern India during the reign of Aurangzeb, taught in a Lahore Madrasah which attracted devout Muslims from various parts of India. Bullah Shah, his most famous disciple, wrote some of the sublimest poetry ever inspired by Islamic mysticism. He sees God at once as the cowherd of Vṛindāvan, the conqueror of Rāvaṇa, and the pilgrim of Kaaba. With his sublime vision of God, Who manifests Himself in the lowest and the highest in society, in

kings as well as grave-diggers, in priests as well as thieves, Bullah Shah has captured the soul of the Punjab. Here is one of his poems:

'I have found, I have found something!
My true Guru has made manifest the unmanifest.
Somewhere It is an enemy, somewhere It is a friend;
Somewhere It is Majnu, somewhere It is Laila;
Somewhere It is the preceptor, somewhere It is the disciple;
In all It has manifested Its own path.
Somewhere It is a thief, somewhere a bestower of gifts;
Somewhere, sitting in the pulpit, It is a Qazi, somewhere It is Tegh Bahadur;
Somewhere It is a mosque, somewhere It has become a temple;
Somewhere It is a Vairāgī in meditation absorbed, somewhere It becomes clad as a Sheikh.
Somewhere it is engaged in digging graves; in each path, You (God) are fondly encountered.
Bullah say: Of the Master (God) I became desirous;
The great king (Inayat) met (me), and my work (wish) was done (realised).'

The Symbolism of Rajput Painting

The eclecticism and humanism of the Mughal age left its deep impress, not merely upon the mystical movements of Bhakti and Sūfism and the vernacular literatures in different parts of India, but also upon the development of painting. The difference between Mughal and Rajput painting is largely a difference between court and folk art. The Mughal schools associated with the courts of the Mughal emperors produced portraits of kings, nobles and saints, and scenes of hunting, recreation, entertainment, and Durbars. The Rajput and Pahari schools generally deal with themes from the myths and legends relating to Krisna and Rādhā, or Śiva and Pārvatī, which appealed to all classes; and their works, illustrating the various nuances of a love which is at once human and divine, are saturated with the devotionalism of the entire mystical movement and the vernacular literature. Besides Kṛiṣṇa and Rādhā, the archetypal lovers who symbolise the eternal destiny of Man and Woman to seek each other as the supreme fulfilment of Life's bliss, the pet deer and peacock, the vigil, tryst and abhisāra, the dust storm, the serried mass

of clouds, torrential rain and flash of lightning, the wriggling serpent underfoot, the twining creeper, the blossoming kadamba tree, and the swirling torrent of the Jamuna river, are all subtle and deep symbols in the well-understood language of folk-poetry and painting. Rajput art does not create a world of fancy, but transforms saṃsāra into an external symbolic world, in which the radiant gestures of man and woman and the passionate movements of plants and animals, both wild and tame, express the infinite quest of Love. Rarely, therefore, has painting been so popular.

Some of the heroes and heroines of divine-cum-human love that are depicted in painting echo and consolidate the sentiments (rasas) of the poet's ardent verses, which the various melodies embody and are also inscribed. The Indian musical modes (rāgas), which are symbolised and personified, as are the seasons, each being appropriate to certain deep emotions and attitudes, also constitute familiar themes in Rajput painting. Pregnant verses from the Gīta Govinda of Jayadeva, the Rasikapriyā of Keshavadas, and other Nāyikā poems are quoted by painters of the Rajput school in their works; while Vaiṣṇava poetry, often consisting of a couplet (dohā) and quatrain (chaupāī), and saturated with deep thought and intense feeling, is akin to the most delicate miniature painting. Thus poetry and painting interpenetrate each other. With its fine and sensitive lines and marvellous colours, the Rajput painting is a finished composition, like the dohā or chaupāī, distilling the delicate emotions of the hero and heroine, who are depicted abstractly in both song and picture. In the entire history of the world's painting such concentration of feeling and gesture and coincidence of sensuous and spiritual values are hardly to be found. Men sang and danced what they felt in the lyrics and saw in the paintings—the sport of Kṛiṣṇa and the passion of Rādhā in the universal love-drama of Nature. In the Rādhā-Kṛiṣṇa paintings we find the same radiance of nature, blended with human love, as revealed in Jayadeva's Gīta Govinda and the Hindi lyrical poems, the beauty of the verdant pasture in sunshine and rain, where Rādhā and the Gopis meet Kṛiṣṇa in the company of cowherds and their flocks, of the spring moonlight piercing the shadows of the groves of Vṛindāvan, the blossoming forth of the kadamba tree on the banks of the Jamuna, the rain clouds throwing their shadows on the dark tamāla trees, and the song of birds and the frolic of animals in praise of Kṛiṣṇa; just as in the Śiva-Pārvatī paintings we find austere mountains with their cliffs, boulders and tall deodars, where everything is hushed into silence for the calm contemplation of the Divine pair.

Kṛiṣṇa, the flower-bedecked flute-player and prince of the shepherds of Vṛindāvan, and Śiva, the serpent-wreathed ascetic of Kailāśa, represent the eternal archetypes of the two contrasting approaches to the Divinity. Kṛiṣṇa is the human soul in love and action, yet completely detached from enjoyment. Śiva is the soul in silence and withdrawal. The poets and painters of the Indian plains and hills sought to interpret these contrasting aspects of the human spirit in a setting of flowery groves and tree-lined river banks or sombre Himalayan snow-ranges. The elusive moonlit pastures of Vṛindāvan and the jagged mountains, torrential streams and camp fires of the Himalayas in Rajput painting both have the power to silence inward strife, and make us feel the unity of the spirit of man with the cosmos, the identity of Being and Becoming.

The Collaboration of Art, Poetry and Music

In India as well as China painting was akin to literature; and the abstraction that was achieved for Chinese painting by calligraphy was achieved for Indian painting by music. In India there are appropriate melodies for the various seasons; there are Rāgamālās, or paintings of musical modes; and there are also bāramāsī, or seasonal lyrical poems. Besides these there are paintings in which each illustration takes the form, not of a symbol or icon, but of a dramatic situation conceived in the abstract, and expressing the universal mood or sentiment appropriate to the season and the time of day or night. With their simplicity of lines and skilful organisation of masses by means of deep colours, these paintings are concerned far less with illustrating an episode or producing picturesque effects than with analysing, epitomising and consolidating abstract moods and situations in a vigorous, yet impersonal style. Music is essentially an abstract art; allied to painting it helps the latter to achieve a degree of abstraction that is normal to music, directing the human soul to Being, which is behind all patterns of sounds, shapes and colours. The descriptive imagery of the lyrical poems, the harmony of the Rāgas or Rāginīs, and the representation of natural scenes in the paintings, all alike and collectively symbolise and evoke the eternal and universal sentiment of wholeness, wonder and awe associated with experience of the noumenon or Being in the realm of nature. Being is in fact the deity of the Rāgamālā painting, and his betrothed the feeling of wonder that the human soul expresses

and symbolises through the cycle of seasons and hours. For about three centuries, from the fifteenth to the eighteenth, three aspects of folk-art, viz., poetry, music and painting, developed along parallel lines in India, expressing the same impersonal moods in different idioms. All were impregnated with religious motifs from the legends of the Bhāgavata and the Purāṇas, as retold in the various vernacular kāvyas and lyrics, which reached the masses through a galaxy of mystics, poets, musicians and painters. Rarely in the history of the world's culture has there been such a collaboration of the arts to express the collective vision of a whole people and epoch as there was at this time in Northern India.

CHAPTER XIX

THE RESURGENCE OF HINDUISM

The Defeat of the Conception of a Muslim State

IN the mausoleum of Aurangzeb Padshah and Ghazi, at Khuldabad, the City of Paradise, where he died broken-hearted in the midst of his campaign against the Marathas, lies buried the conception of a Muslim state that this cold, crafty and intolerant Sunni emperor sought to impose upon India, causing much misery and suffering among her people and the ultimate dissolution of the Mughal Empire. Aurangzeb held in great derision the legitimate heir to the Mughal throne, the enlightened and extraordinarily liberal Dara Shukoh, whom he called 'the prayer-monger'. Such was his loyalty to the rigid Islamic creed, that he sewed caps to earn his subsistence. Appropriately enough, he is interred in a neighbourhood that has received the remains of many orthodox and bigoted missionaries of Islam—Jalaluddin Hanjrawan, Muntajabuddin Burhanuddin and Zainuddin. Long before his death, however, the Sikhs, Marathas, Rajputs, and Jats had combined to resist unbendingly his attempt to build a purely Islamic state in the country. Aurangzeb himself was conscious of his grievous mistake; for he wrote to his son from his 'lonely death-bed':

> 'I have come alone and am going alone:
> I have not done well to the country and the people,
> and of the future there is no hope'.

One of the most distinguished Hindi poets of the eighteenth century, Bhushan chided him thus:

'Shame to thee (Aurangzeb)! Send all the Syeds, Shaikhs and Pathans and give battle to Śivājī. You have lost numberless forts and towns to Śivājī in the Deccan. Why do you break the temples of the North? Having failed to cause any harm to the Lord of the Hindus

(Śivājī), you oppress the helpless and poor Hindus. O Lord of Delhi, do not put on the crown of ignominy on this earth by calling yourself Alamgir!'

The Development of the Sikhs, From a Persecuted Sect to a Martial Nation

In the Punjab, the vital home province of the Mughals, the year of the death of Aurangzeb Ghazi (1707) saw the ministry of the last Sikh Guru, Govind Singh, the Sacha Padshah, or True King, of the Sikhs, who had by this time been completely transformed by the Mughal persecution from a small and oppressed sect into a powerful nation. Sikhism is an offshoot of the bhakti movement led by Rāmānanda, Kabīr, Chaitanya and Vallabh. The hymns of Jayadeva, Nāmadeva, Trilochana, Kabīr, Rāmānanda, Sadhana, Beni, Dhanna, Pipa, Sen, Ravi Dās, and Sūrdās, and what is more interesting, of two Muslim saints, Farid and Bhikan, find a place in the Adi-granth of the Sikhs. The indebtedness of the Sikh religion to Kabīr, whom Nānak may have met, and with whose hymns he was very familiar, is amply indicated by the extent of the Kabīr portion of the Granth Sahib. Nānak also owes a good deal to the Gorakhnāth-Rāmānandī tradition. He refers to the practice of Sahaja yoga as an aid to the eradication of lust and wrath, and to release from the entanglements of the world. Guru Govind also refers appreciatively to Gorakh as the prince among yogis. But in the social and political situation of the Punjab Nānak's faith and mission dealt constructively with the moral issues at stake. Gorakh's Sahaja-yoga, Rāmānanda's social equalitarianism and Kabīr's and the Sūfis' harmonising of Hinduism and Islam were fulfilled and amplified in a positive approach to the values of life and society, the emphasis shifting from other-worldliness to an ethical endeavour that fashioned a nation. The repudiation of idolatry, ceremonialism, caste and polytheism all served the main purpose of building up practical, sturdy and courageous characters. At the same time Nānak as well as his successors drank deep from the wells of the Bhakti movement of contemporary India. Here is a magnificent hymn of his on God's transcendence:

'The sun and moon, O Lord, are thy lamps,
The firmament is Thy salver, the orbs of stars the pearls encased in it.

The perfume of the sandal is Thy incense, the wind Thy fan;
All the forests are Thy flowers, O Lord of light.
What homage is this, O Thou destroyer of birth?
Unsounded strains of ecstasy are the trumpets of Thy worship.
Thou hast a thousand eyes and yet not one eye;
Thou has a thousand forms and yet not one form;
Thou hast a thousand pure feet and yet not one foot;
Thou has a thousand organs of smell and yet not one organ:
Fascinating do I find this play of Thine.
The light which is in everything is Thine, O Lord of Light,
From its brilliance everything gains brilliance;
By the Gurū's teaching the light becomes manifest,
What pleaseth Thee is the real ārati'.

Nānak's successors, Aṅgad, Amardās, and Rāmdās, were all men of the highest character who disciplined the people in a practical ethics of righteous and human social action. To Guru Aṅgad must be given the credit for inventing the Gurmukhī characters, which, being easy for the masses to learn, greatly facilitated the spread of Sikhism and the welding together of the Sikh people. The institution of langar, or the communal kitchen, where prince and peasant, rich and poor, high and low-born could mess together without social distinction, fostered a spirit of charity on a large scale and also became a powerful binding force. To Amardās, Akbar granted the plot of land at Amritsar on which the famous Golden Temple was later constructed, as the central place of worship, communion and assembly of the Sikhs.

The fifth Guru, Arjun, was a leader of great organising ability, under whom the Sikhs increased considerably in numbers, wealth, prestige and power. But his heart was full of devotion to the Beloved One, and he was steeped in the Bhāgavata and the Vaiṣṇava tradition. Here is one of his beautiful hymns:

'Thy red jacket becomes thee;
Thou art pleasing to the Lord, and thou winnest His heart.
Who has given this bloom to thy face?
What dye hath given thee thy bright complexion?
Thou art beautiful, thou art a happy wedded wife.
In thy house is thy Beloved, in thy house is good fortune'.

His friendship with the rebel Prince Khusrau was sufficient pretext for Jahangir to put him to death, on a charge of treason. The seed of

militarism is contained in the message the martyred Arjun sent to his successor just before his death: 'Let him sit fully armed on his throne and maintain an army to the best of his ability'. Har Govind was the first to gather arms and horses from his followers. The ninth Guru, Tegh Bahadur, who took up the cause of some persecuted Kāśmira Brahmans, was also executed, by Aurangzeb. Tegh Bahadur gave his head but not his faith (sir diā sar nā diā). The series of martyrdoms encouraged the development of a militant nationalism in the Punjab; where the Hindus also turned to the Sikhs, now transformed into a full-fledged martial race, for help and support against Mughal persecution. Religious and militant nationalism was the reply of the people of the Punjab to the challenge of Aurangzeb, seated on the imperial throne at Delhi.

The Khalsa and the Pahul

The leader of this new militancy was the tenth Guru, Govind Singh (1666–1708), one of the great kings and heroes of Indian history. In order to create a profound impression among the general body of Hindus, Guru Govind introduced the rite of Pahul, or Saṃskāra of the sword, by which the Sikhs entered into a second birth, irrespective of differences in caste, and became Dvijas by drinking together water stirred by a dagger and by partaking of a sacramental meal prepared from consecrated flour. The scavenger and the leather-dresser were now enabled to eat side by side with the Brahmans in the villages of the Punjab. The lowest in society were now rulers of the land, members of a common brotherhood, the Khalsa or the elect, with the Guru himself bearing the surname of singh, or lion. It was a kind of neo-Brāhmanical saṃskāra, or ceremonial observance, which symbolised the complete abolition of caste and the unification of the people, in readiness for a holy crusade against the jehad declared by Aurangzeb. Thus was the Khalsa established in 1699 as the spearhead of resistance not merely of the Sikh but also of the entire Hindu nation against Mughal tyranny.

Guru Govind's symbolic interpretation of the heroic deeds of Rāmachandra, Kṛiṣṇa and other avatārs and heroes, and of the Goddess Chaṇḍi, was pitched in a different key from the earlier Sikh Granth, and was intended to foster a militant nationalism among the Hindus as a people. It is remarkable that an intrepid warrior and crafty general could also have been a poet and scholar. But the robust,

militant character of Sikhism undoubtedly rested largely on Guru Govind's poetic treatment of those qualities of heroism and valour, whether of gods and goddesses or of legendary heroes, that he wanted his soldier-saints to emulate on their own fields of battle. And his religious hymns were characterised by equally deep poetic fervour. Here is one of them:

> 'The peacocks dance, the frogs croak, and the clouds ever
> thunder.
> The tree ever standeth on one leg in the forest;
> And as for those who take not life,
> The sarayogi bloweth on the ground before setting down
> his foot.
> The stones through several ages remain in one place;
> The raven and the kites travel from country to country:
> How can the wretch who is without divine knowledge,
> And who is never absorbed in the great Benefactor,
> Be saved without faith in Him?'

Sikh Culture

The solidarity and selfless spirit of the Khalsa produced another most remarkable man among the Sikhs, the lion of the Punjab, Ranjit Singh (1780–1839). He was not only one of the greatest statesmen of the age, but was also an able and astonishingly successful military genius, a 'Bonaparte in miniature', who called himself and the Sikhs collectively the Khalsa. Within about three decades he had carved out a kingdom embracing Kangra, Kāśmīra and the major part of the Indus valley. He would have been able to include also the cis-Sutlej states, but for the defection of certain jealous Sikh chieftains, who were encouraged by the British. That the entire Sikh nation could not be brought under the Khalsa had its tragic repercussions in the later history of the Sikhs. Though an intrepid and courageous fighter and conqueror he was genial and humane. 'Never perhaps was so large an empire founded by one man with so little criminality', said a German, Baron Karl Von Hegel. Though he had little education, he had a discerning and liberal mind and his court attracted some of the best talents, irrespective of religion and nationality. His Chief Minister was a Muslim, al Fakir Azizuddin, and his finance minister was a Rajput, Raja Dina Nath. He also

appointed Europeans of various nationalities as high army officers. Art and learning flourished at his court. The Chief Minister was a Sūfi, who saw no difference between Hinduism and Islam: 'I am a man floating in the midst of a mighty river; I turn my eyes towards the land, but can distinguish no difference on either hand'. A distinct Sikh school of painting developed in the last quarter of the eighteenth century, which bore the impress of the fluent, realistic folk-style of the hills rather than that of the formal, academic Mughal art. Portraits of the Gurus and chieftains and representations of durbars and hunting scenes were common, mainly because Sikhism has no icons; nor has it developed any mythology of its own.

The Hindu Revival under Śivājī

Just a year before Guru Govind took up the challenge in the Punjab on behalf of the Hindus as Sacha Padshah against Aurangzeb (1675), the Maratha hero Śivājī crowned himself king at Raigarh in right ancient Hindu imperial fashion, and assumed the time-honoured titles of Siṃhāsanādhiśvara and Śrī Śivā Chhatrapati, or king of kings. The slogan in Mahārāṣṭra was Hindu Dharma and culture, 'the Gods of the faith', 'cows and Brāhmans'. Śivājī combined indomitable courage and military genius with a profound love of the folk culture, songs and legends of Mahārāṣṭra, which led him more than once to risk capture by going to Poona in disguise to hear a religious recitation. He reverently approached Tukārām for spiritual guidance; but Tukārām advised him to become a disciple of Rāmdās Samarth. No two contemporary saints in the same land presented a greater contrast. Tukārām belonged to the ancient tradition of Bhakti and was steeped in the love of Vithovā, caring for nothing else in the world. One of his hymns runs thus:

'As the bride looks back to her mother's house
  And goes but with dragging feet,
So my soul looks up unto Thee and longs
  That Thou and I may meet.

As a child cries out and is sore distressed
  When its mother it cannot see,
As a fish that is taken from out the wave
  So 'tis, says Tukā, with me'.

Tukārām insists that it is impossible to combine both spiritual joy and activity in the world: 'worldly life and life with the Supreme —he who acts both parts together in the end achieves neither. If a man seeks to lay his hands on two grain pits at once, he will end by destroying himself'. Yet the world is meaningful for him. 'Through God the whole world is related to us; when a rope is stretched every fibre is tense. The world is not worthless or an object of scorn; see how each life is blended with the life of all. The joy and grief of others affect us, just as our joys and griefs affect them. Tukā says, when this pure principle dwells within the heart, the outward man is radiant with delight'.

The Saints of Pandharpur

The saints of Paṇḍharpur promoted both a national religious revival and an equalitarian social movement that prepared the ground for a pan-Hindu upsurge. The chain of saints, scholars and poets stemmed from Chakradhara Svāmī, a minister of the King of Devagiri and founder of the Mahānubhava sect. He was the disciple of the Maratha saint Govindāchrāya of Mursi. He recognised no other God but Kṛiṣṇa, and repudiated idolatry. He became the focus of an aggressive Hinduism at a time when the Sūfī teachers and missionaries of Islam first reached Devagiri to carry out their programme of conversion. Other saints and poets included Nāmadeva (1270–1350), Bhūpadeva, Hemādri, Jñāneśvara, author of the famous commentary on the Gītā (1290), Janārdana Svāmī, and his famous disciple, Ekanāth (1548–1598). The galaxy of poets and saints kept alive the religious faith of the people and provided the inspiration for the Hindu resurgence under Śivājī.

Śivājī found the leader of spiritual resistance not in Tukārām (1608–1649) but in Rāmdās (1608–1681), who, unlike Tukārām, did not extol other-worldliness, but sought to reconcile the material and the spiritual quests. With Rāmdās only success in Saṃsāra can assure success in Paramārtha; the former is a necessary condition of the latter. When Śivājī went to him in spiritual distress, according to the Santa Vijaya of Mahīpatī, and wished to remain with him, a recluse, Rāmdās accepted his homage and devotion, but after fortifying him with scriptural truths, set him to fulfil his personal duties in the world. The emphasis is thus on social action, but in complete detachment and freedom from egoism. Rāmdās is the supporter of the

principle of the golden mean. Neither indulgence nor withdrawal but moderation holds the key to man's ethical life. Rāmdās stands somewhat apart from the school of devotees of Vithovā at Paṇḍharpur, and his monumental work, 'Dāsabodha', integrates the various sciences and arts of life with the religious quest. Something like 800 maths were established by Rāmdās throughout the Deccan, with images of Rāma and Hanumān, and with gymnasiums, or akhāḍās, attached to them, which became foci of national religious revival and also of physical training and resistance. Rāmdās's programme was indeed essentially practical and many-sided, and intended to make every Hindu citizen a samartha, or 'valiant', like himself. He stressed the importance of hard work and the overcoming of laziness, and he possessed great political sagacity. Such a guru was exceedingly helpful to the leader of a puissant nation who had inherited the great traditions of the Sātavāhana and Vijayanagar Empires, and who understood the task of protecting and reviving the Hindu Dharma. In this he was supported not only by the Kṣatriya princes of the South but also by those of the North, such as Jai Singh and Chhattrasāl; and many bards of the North came to his court to sing the glory of 'sārva-bhauma-rājya'.

The Maratha Ideal of Hindu Pad-Pādshāhī

The Marathas became the dominant power in India during the eighteenth century and produced a series of great statesmen and warriors, with whom the British had to contend for their final conquest of India. It is significant that the imperialist expansion of the Marathas to the North, which was undertaken by Baji Rao I, set forth the ideal of Hindu Pad-Pādshāhī, or the Hindu Empire, which won the support of the Hindu princes, chiefs and zamindars of Malwa, Gujarat, Rajputana and Bundelkhand.

The period of Maratha imperialism led to a literary renaissance. One of the fathers of Maratha literature was Śrīdhar (1670–1728), who wrote the Triumph of Rāma (Rāma Vijaya) and the Exploits of the Pāṇḍavas. The myths and legends of the epics were thus made accessible to the common people of Mahārāṣṭra. Śrīdhar's Pothī still remains today as popular in Mahārāṣṭra as Tulsidas's Rāmacharita Mānasa in North India and Kṛittivāsa's Rāmāyaṇa in eastern India. Another important writer is Mahīpati, whose Triumphs of the Devotees and Saints (Bhakta Vijaya and Santa Vijaya) resembles

Nābhā Dās's Bhaktamāla of North India. Moro Pant was also a poet of considerable reputation.

The Vitality of Popular Hinduism

One of the remarkable features of Indian civilization is the vitality of Hinduism, which draws its strength on the one hand from the myths and legends of the Epics and the Purāṇas and on the other from the unfailing reservoir of faith and devotion of the common people, which has withstood and survived all persecution. Over and over again a political awakening in India has assumed a religious aspect whenever the Indian Dharma has been threatened by foreign invasion and culture, and it has been supported by the spontaneous and undying faith of the common people. Thus not only the Brāhmans and Kṣatriyas or Rajputs, but also the masses have stood in defence of their land and culture whenever priests and monks were threatened or killed by foreign conquerors, whenever temples were destroyed and monasteries and schools of learning closed. The stubborn defence put up by the Guptas against the Hūṇas and other outlandish barbarians (Dāruṇa mlechchhas), by the Rajputs, who assumed the title of Vikramāditya, against the hordes of the Turko-Afghans, by the Sikhs in the Punjab, by the Jats in middle India, and by the Marathas in the south, all alike testify to the capacity of Hindu India across the centuries to renovate herself when the crisis comes. The Bhakti movement from the fifteenth to the seventeenth century was a movement against caste, priesthood and the external observances of the Hindu Dharma; but it stimulated pan-Hindu resistance to the bigoted and intolerant policy of Aurangzeb, of which Guru Govind Singh in the Punjab, Śivājī in the Deccan, and Sūraj Mal Jat in Bharatpur and the U.P. took up the militant leadership. Throughout the eighteenth century, an epoch of universal turmoil and misery in India, the great array of mystics, poets and saints distributed through the different regions likewise demonstrated the spiritual resilience of the common people amidst the conflicts, sufferings and despairs of their rulers.

The Śākta Mystics of Bengal

In Bengal, exposed to unparalleled plunder, barbarity and chicanery in the era of Clive (1756–1774), Śāktism produced a most elegant

poet in Bhārat Chandra Rāi Guṇākar (1713-1761), who wrote the Annadā Maṅgal, the Kālikā Maṅgal or Vidyāsundar, and the Annapūrṇā Maṅgal or Māna Singh. His best lyrics are to be found in the Vidyāsundar, which was completed only four years before the battle of Plassey. In 1757 he composed the Satyanārāyaṇa Pāñchālī, which celebrates the common Hindu and Muslim worship of Satya pir; just as his own style is the best record of the elegant use of words assimilated from Arabic, Sanskrit and Perisan in Bengali poetry. Bhārat Chandra Rāi has been compared with Pope and Dryden. He was a master of diction and rhyme and exercised a great influence upon Bengali poetry towards the end of the eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth.

The same spiritual tradition produced the celebrated poet-mystics Rāma Prasād Sen (born 1718) and Kamalā Kānta Bhattacharya (born 1809). The Śākta lyrics yield nothing in religious fervour and depth to the Vaiṣṇava padāvalīs, and they enjoy equal popularity among the rural masses. Here is a typical hymn of Rāma Prasād's:

'The Fisherman waits after casting his vast net
Over the fathomless waters of the universe
To catch mortals like fishes; He bides his time.
Whenever He desires He pulls them by the hair.
None can escape from this Time-net.
How can one who is Time-bound obtain his deliverance?
Call the Time-destroyer, Mother Kālī;
She will rescue you from the clutches of Time.'

In another hymn Rāmaprasād protests about human inequality

'O Goddess, do I not know of Your great compassion!
Some people lack even a morsel of food,
While others enjoy a surfeit of delicacies and an abundance of treasures.
Some go in luxurious palanquins, others carry them on their shoulders;
Some wear gorgeous shawls, others do not even have rags to cover their nakedness'.

In another, about the vanity of forms of worship:

'O Mind, do not delude yourself about the Goddess,
Do you not realise that the entire universe is Her form?

Why then do you seek to worship Her earthen image?
The Mother decks the universe with infinite riches;
Do you not feel ashamed at making a few golden trinkets
for Her idol?
It is She who nourishes the universe;
Do you not feel ashamed at making offerings of rice and
gram before Her?
She protects the universe with infinite care;
How can you offer sacrifices of goats?
The Mother can be worshipped only through devotion.
You may celebrate Her pūjā with great show before the
public
But She will never accept your bribe'.

Rāmaprasād was undoubtedly a genius. It seems to have been he who introduced into Bengali poetry and religion the devotional songs of welcome (āgamanī) and farewell (vijayā) that are sung during the autumn festival of the Goddess Durgā in Bengal, when daughters visit their parents. The Durgā Pujā became prominent in Bengal from the middle of the eighteenth century through the initiative and patronage of Rāja Kṛiṣṇa Chandra Roy of Nadia, who gathered round him the best talents of Bengal. In these poignant āgamanī and vijayā lyrics the deity is conceived as a daughter who comes home for a glorious stay of three days and then returns with her husband Śiva to Kailāśa, amidst the wails of the family. The nuances of parental love for the Divine Daughter Umā or Gauri, are as full of religious exaltation as the romantic love of Rādhā and the Gopis for the youthful Kṛiṣṇa. Thus the songs help parents to transform their all-too-human tenderness into spiritual aspiration. For, is not every mother the mother of Umā, Menakā, and is not Umā the Divine Daughter, inscrutable but adorable, and the wrench from her after the reunion of three days the anguish of separation from God? Every daughter is the reflection of Umā, who demands love and tenderness, but who makes, alas, but a brief sojourn on the earth. In the Rāmaprasādī lyrics the idealisation of the parent-daughter relationship symbolises a distinctive mode of approach to the deity; when sung in the Chaṇḍī maṇḍaps of the Goddess they still attract thousands of listeners. The characteristic Rāma Prasādī folk melody and the devotional hymns, besides the āgamani and vijayā lyrics to the Goddess, have a profound appeal in millions of Bengali homes even after a lapse of two centuries.

In Kamalā Kānta's ardent and profound lyrics we discern a perfect blending of absolute monism with the worship of Kālī and Kṛiṣṇa, and of yoga with ritual, reinterpreted symbolically and metaphysically. An exquisite Bengali song to Kālī, the Dark Mother of Nirvāṇa, runs as follows:

'In dense darkness, O Mother, Thy formless beauty sparkles,
Which the yogis meditate in dark mountain caves;
In the lap of boundless dark, on Mahānirvāṇa's waves upborne,
Peace flows serene and inexhaustible.
In the form of the void, in the robe of darkness wrapped,
Who art Thou, Mother, seated alone in the shrine of samādhi?
From the lotus of Thy fear-scattering feet flash Thy love's lightenings;
Thy spirit-face shines forth with laughter terrible and loud'.

A sincere and spontaneous type of mysticism also emerged at this time in the Āuls and Bāuls. They comprised both Muslim Sūfis and Hindu saints, and their songs reflect the vast silence of the evergreen fields and expansive rivers of Bengal. With no metaphysical or theological system, the Bāuls worship by means of music and song, and naïvely and directly apprehend Reality as the Super-individual Person—'the Man whom the soul seeks' (maner mānuṣ). The unitive experience here reveals to the mystic a dual movement of the Spirit, of man God-ward and of God man-ward. In eternal communion the Real Man dallies with the Beloved, shutting the gates of the senses and gazing at her eternal beauty. Rarely in the world's religious poetry do we come across such a humanistic note in the adventures of the soul:

'Man, man, every one speaks of man.
What is man?
Man is health, man is life, man is the jewel of the Heart;
Very few on earth know the truth of Man.
Man knows a love which other creatures know not,
And man alone knows the depth of such love.
Man's love helps him to know the Real Man;
Thus man knows Man;
The strength of man-in-Man is understood by man alone'.

The following exquisite Bāul song, translated by Rabindranath Tagore, speaks of love as holding the divine and the human in sweet eternal communion in the unfolding of life.

'It goes on blossoming for ages, the soul lotus, in which I am bound as well as Thou, without escape. There is no end to the opening of its petals, and the honey in it has such sweetness that Thou, like an enchanted bee, canst never desert it, and therefore Thou art bound, and I am, and salvation is nowhere'.

The Eclecticism and Tolerance of the North Indian Mystics

Northern India, amidst the uncertainty and rapine of the see-saw struggle between the Marathas and Ahmad Shah Abdali, also produced a galaxy of mystics, saints and reformers, whose continuity was unbroken in the eighteenth century. Among these one of the most prominent was Yari Sahib, a Muslim saint of Delhi (1668–1725), the disciple of the woman saint Bāwarī Sāhebā, who left behind an array of disciples in the Uttar Pradesh. Yari is the author of the Ratnāvalī, which is full of exquisite religious lyrics. He said of the universe: 'Creation is a painting by the Creator on the canvas of the void with the brush of Love. He who has not experienced this joy through Love will never know it through reasoning. Men and women are as bubbles in the ocean of Divine love'.

One of his disciples was Bulleh, a ploughman of Fyzabad, who converted his Rajput zamindar and employer, Gulāl. Below is a fine lyric by Gulāl:

> 'The bee of the mind plays Vasanta,
> The unstruck music sounds in infinite space,
> The lotus opens and the bees make a noise,
> The light shines forth ever further.
> The heart is filled with joy to see it again and again;
> When the mind becomes entangled, then it is enmeshed
>   in the net.
> The current of light flows in, wave after wave;
> My heart is placed at the lotus feet.
> It does not come (take birth), nor does it go; the soul
>   dies not:
> Gladly it drinks the immortal nectar again and again.
> The Lord is beyond reach, beyond perception, beyond
>   sight;

I have found the Lord by seeing him with my eyes.
Says Gulāl: my desire is fulfilled,
I have triumphed over Yama and obtained an abode in Light'.

One of Gulāl's disciples was Bhīkhā, who belonged to Ghazipur. The following lyric finely expresses his religious outlook:

'God Himself is the earth, from which a multitude of vessels are made
By the Potter, Whose creation has a wonderful variety.
Names are like gold, they become ornaments and appear as other than they are;
But whether they are pure or impure, their basis is gold itself.
The foam, the bubbles, the currents and waves are many;
Know that the water is the same, whether it be sweet or salt.
The soul has one caste, in the opinion of Bhīkhā;
The robbers belong to His government as well as the travellers'.

Another of Yari Sahib's disciples was Kesava Dās (1690–1765), who belonged to the Vaiśya caste and wrote the Amighut (The Draught of Nectar). A famous saint was Jagjīvan Dās (born 1665), who was a Thakur of Barabanki and in the tradition of Kabīr. He played an important part in bringing together Muslim and Hindu lines of thought and worship among the lower castes of the Uttar Pradesh. He founded the Satnāmi sect, which contained vast numbers of the lowest caste; or rather he reorganised the earlier sect of the same name that had been suppressed by Aurangzeb. He wrote in Avadhi Hindi and his works include the Jñana Prakāśa, the Mahāpralaya and the Parama Granth. In the following verse we discern Jagjīvan Dās's strong emphasis on social equality:

'O saint, the one Light shines in all.
Consider it well! There is no second;
The blood and the body are the same.
There is no Brāhman or saint;
Some are called men and some women;
The Invisible Puruṣa is in all'.

A most distinguished saint of this age was Prāṇa Nāth (1700–1780), who flourished in Bundelkhand, where Chhatrasāl Bundelā of Panna was one of his disciples. He emphasised the unity of Hindus, Muslims and Christians, and was familiar with the Bible, the Koran and the Hindu scriptures. In Christian fashion he regards love as the entirety of God. 'Love is indivisible and eternal. Love is in the body of the Beloved; with the Beloved is love. In the Beloved's soul is love. Love it is that makes the eyes see beyond, even the Beyond of the Beyond. Love bestows on one the abode of the indivisible Lord'. Again in almost Christian style he sings:

> 'Now tell I of Love, which is God Himself and beyond words;
> God's creation is a fraction of God, but it (Love) is the deep-set eternal joy'.

His sect is called Dhāmī, because it regards God as the Dhāma, or home. It embraces both Hindu and Muslim followers.

Another famous saint was Gharib Dās (1717–1778), who was born in Rohtak, and worshipped Rama, Hari and Allah together. His catholicity was most striking, as his hymns were most ardent. It is curious that his verses contain many Persian and English words. Śiva Nārāyaṇa (born 1710) was a saint of Ghazipur. He had a large number of followers among the Rajput soldiers. His order observes no caste distinctions whatsoever. He is the author of various songs and poems, of which the most important are Sant Vilās and Bhajan Granth. The Mughal Emperor Muhammad Shah was his disciple; and this Imperial support helped in some measure to propagate the order.

Palṭū Dās of Fyzabad (1757–1825) was yet another well-known saint; he was a disciple of Gulāl, and thus in the line of Bāwarī Sāhebā, and he flourished in Ayodhya. He is sometimes described as a second Kabīr. He suffered from the persecution of the Bairāgīs. He strongly condemned caste and sect differences. One of his observations is that the upper castes had ruined the lower ones and themselves too. He is the author of Rāma Kuṇḍaliyā and Ātma Karma. The Kuṇḍaliyā verses are well known for their ardour and beauty. Rituals he considers to be of no avail where the inner spirit is lacking: 'Of what avail is the unguent applied to the eyes if a girl has no beauty'. He goes in for complete self-surrender: 'But I will soon please my Lord, (by pleading that) servants commit hundreds of errors'. The following verse is entirely in the manner and spirit of Kabīr:

'They say Rama is in the east, and Khuda in the west;
Who then lives in the north and the south?
Where is the Lord, and where is He not?
Why do the Hindus and Muslims raise a storm?
The Hindus and Muslims have engaged in strife,
And the two faiths run into two opposing camps.
Palṭū the slave says the Lord is in all,
He is not divided at all; this is the truth'.

In the district of Gonda, Sahajānanda (born 1780) was the founder of a sect known as Swāmī Nārāyan, which freely admitted Muslims as well as lower caste Hindus. Tulsī Sahib (1760–1842) was another saint, brother of Baji Rao II, who lived in Hathras. He was familiar with both Hindu and Muslim scriptures and was a sharp critic of ritualism. He was the author of the Ghaṭa Rāmāyaṇa. In Bihar there was also a saint named Dariyā, of the Arrah district, who was born of Muslim parents, and who was the founder of an order that combined in worship the Muslim kornish and the Hindu sijdāh.

Kingdoms and empires were falling; the demolition of the famous temples of Somnath, Mathura and Banaras, and the persecution of Hinduism by Aurangzeb had left a trail of bitterness and resentment; and confusion and chaos reigned over the whole of India in the eighteenth century: but the galaxy of saints, poets and mystics, all emerging from the lower social strata in different parts of the country throughout this unhappy century, kept alive the spirit of broad humanism and universalism in worship and love, which transcended the external forms and observances of Hinduism and Islam, and also the woes of the ruling dynasties and princes. Not the cities and towns, where the influence of decadent Muslim and Hindu courts was demoralising and vulgarising, but the villages and hamlets, with their immemorial culture, marked by tolerance, amity and devotion, released the springs of hope and renewal in one of the darkest periods of Indian history.

CHAPTER XX

THE LIBERALISM AND IDEALISM OF THE INDO-BRITISH RENAISSANCE

The Rise of European Factories in India

MODERN European civilization largely owes its origin to the quest for trade or territory that inspired the bold exploration of John Cabot, Columbus, Magellan and Vasco da Gama. It was the spices of the coast of Malabar, described as 'the key of Hind' by the Arab merchants who captured the lucrative trade in the Indian Ocean, that shaped modern European and Indian history. In 1498 Vasco da Gama made his celebrated voyage to India, rounding the Cape of Good Hope, and landing at Calicut. The first European factory and fortress in Asia was thus built by the Portuguese, at Cochin. In the last year of the fifteenth century, the King of Portugal wrote in a spirit of banter and bravado to the King of Spain that the real Indies were discovered not by Columbus but by 'a nobleman of our household', who had brought with him 'cinnamon, cloves, ginger, nutmeg, pepper, and also many fine stones of all sorts; so that henceforth all Christendom in this part of Europe shall be able to provide itself with these spices and precious stones'.

The Portuguese were at the height of their power in the Eastern seas in the middle of the sixteenth century. Diu, Bassein, Goa, St. Thomé, Negapatam and Hooghly served as the bases on which Portugal's commercial prosperity in India was built. In this period sea-voyages were so long and perilous, and mortality in the small, crowded ships so heavy, that the Portuguese never made any serious attempts at colonisation or the acquisition of territory in the hinterland, but confined themselves to the occupation of strategic posts, straits and islands, and to the defence of them against attack, in order to maintain their mastery of the trade-routes and their exclusive monopoly of the Eastern trade.

Both the Dutch and the English, however, who appeared on the

Eastern scene a century after the Portuguese, had not merely commercial aims, but also colonial ambitions that were manifest from the very start, especially in the case of the former. The Dutch, under the leadership of Goen and Van Diemen, soon secured an advantageous position in the Indian Archipelago, Ceylon and Malabar. The English were handicapped in the East by the vacillation of their Company's Directors between mercantile and political objectives, the civil war in England, the caution of the English sovereigns, and the rapid development of English colonial activities in America. In 1616, when the English had factories at Surat, Agra, Ahmedabad and Broach in Western India, and at Masulipatam and Petapoli on the Coromandal Coast, and carried on commerce from a considerable number of the ports of India, Persia and the Red Sea, a report to the East India Company stated that it was impracticable for them to open trade 'in countries bordering on the Ganges' because of the Portuguese monopoly. 'For small shipping there were no ports in Bengal but such as the Portuguese possessed'.

The important entrepôts of Portuguese commerce in Bengal at the beginning of the seventeenth century were Hooghly, Chittagong and Pipli. Hooghly and Chittagong were called Porto pequeno and Porto grande respectively by the Portuguese at that time, referring to the small and big estuaries of the Ganges. Saptagrām, or Sātgāon, which stood on the confluence of the Bhāgirathī and Sarasvatī, and was the most famous port of South Asia for more than sixteen centuries, suddenly declined in the last decades of the sixteenth century owing to the silting up of the two rivers; and in its place rose Hooghly. In 1585 Ralph Fitch found Saptagrām a fair city for 'a city of the Moors, and very plentiful of all things'. But soon its prosperity was eclipsed by the neighbouring port-town of Hooghly. To the Portuguese Hooghly became as important a strategic settlement on the western estuary of Bengal as Chittagong was on the eastern, and Negapatam on the Coromandal Coast. From these port-towns their fleet could protect their trading vessels from Bengal, Orissa and Coromandal on their way to Arakan and thence to Malacca, and and also to Ceylon. The monopoly of the East Indian trade was successfully maintained by the Portuguese against the challenge of the new-comers almost throughout the sixteenth century and the first quarter of the seventeenth century.

The European Struggle for Monopoly of East Indian Trade

It was a historical accident that gave the English East India Company its mastery over India. At the beginning of the seventeenth century the Dutch Company was preoccupied with their struggle against the Portuguese in the Archipelago; for at that time it was not India but the Archipelago that was considered the better prize by the Europeans. The English East India Company thus enjoyed an initial advantage in that it was the might of the Dutch fleet that destroyed the Portuguese monopoly in India, Ceylon and the Spice Islands, and paved the way for the subsequent prosperous English trade. It did not have to incur the vast expenditure of maintaining a navy, garrisons and fortresses that burdened the Dutch Company. Nor could any maritime power succeed in the battle for India which had its strongest settlements only in Malabar and Ceylon; for the Dutch did not assume responsibilities of sovereignty in Surat, Coromandal and Bengal, although it was largely these areas that provided their greatest commercial gains. In these three regions the English gradually wrested from the Indian rulers trade privileges that were more advantageous than what the Dutch enjoyed; and their profits went on expanding by leaps and bounds, as commercial monopoly and political power aided each other. Even Bengal, which had yielded annual profits of hundreds of thousands of guilders, began to show frequent losses for the Dutch Company after 1720. With the diminution of their naval superiority, the Dutch sought to retain trading privileges in India by means of flattery and presents to the Indian rulers. Meanwhile, their other rival, the French under Dupleix, were even able to capture Masulipatam, much to their chagrin, in 1750.

The grandiose plans of the French statesman Colbert to obtain a share of the profits of the Dutch and English trade in the East Indies by establishing a string of settlements from Madras and East India to the ports of Persia and East Africa went astray, owing to the misfortunes of the French fleet on the sea and quarrels among the Directors and subordinates of the French Company. Later, the European war injured French trade and led to the inefficiency of the Company's factories in Bengal, Gujarat, Malabar and Coromandal, which was aggravated by the incapacity of several successive Governors at Pondicherry, and financial bankruptcy. It was, however, the French and not the Dutch whom the English emulated in certain important matters of Indian policy and army organisation. For it

was the French who first negotiated political alliances with Indian chiefs and rulers, and who trained Indian sepoys in European methods of warfare, and led them on conquering expeditions into the interior, far away from their forts and factories on the coast. As a matter of fact, among the European powers, it was the French who were first able to establish their dominion over a large area in the Indian peninsula; it lasted, however, for only two decades. The ultimate failure of the French in India, who also had settlements at the strategic positions of Surat, Pondicherry, Masulipatam and Chandernagore was due to the naval superiority of the English, which was able to win for them the maritime province of Bengal, with its enormous resources and trade, and its river connections with the north. Both Dupleix and Clive dreamt of a European Empire, which was to arise from the ruins of the Mughal Empire in India; but Dupleix's vision, based on mastery of the Carnatic, was geographically destined to fail, as Clive's based on the Ganges delta was to succeed.

To gain supremacy over Bengal the English had to defeat not merely Nawab Sirajuddowla at Plassey but also the French at Chandernagore and the Dutch at Chinsura. It was their suzerainty over Bengal that assured the English the command of the wealth of Hindustan with which they ultimately won the Indian Empire. Yet the Directors of the English Company at home still pinned their best hopes of a fortunate outcome to their venture in the East Indies on the trade with the ports of the Arabian Sea.

India, Hub of World Commerce in the Seventeenth Century

Lord Palmerston aptly observed: 'The original settlers began with a factory, the factory grew into a fort, the fort expanded into a district and the district into a province'. The building up of the two Eastern dominions, the British dominion with its capital in Calcutta and the Dutch dominion with its capital in Batavia, followed the downfall of Portuguese power in the East after a long-drawn triangular conflict that was carried on in Asiatic waters until the middle of the seventeenth century. It originated in the same impulsion as that which led to the Spanish occupation of Mexico and Peru, the Portuguese conquest of Brazil, and the establishment of English and French colonies and dependencies in America. The Atlantic, Indian and Pacific Oceans were first unified by commerce by the

middle of the seventeenth century; and until the beginning of the nineteenth century enormous quantities of gold and silver from Mexico and Peru flowed into India to pay for the cloth and silk goods, indigo and pepper, that she supplied to Europe, and also for her saltpetre, which made gunpowder for the chronic wars of that continent. It was India that was the hub of this world commerce until the beginning of the Industrial Revolution. But Indian shipping was ruined by Portuguese, Dutch and English piracy in the Asiatic seas, and Indian trade by the differential trade monopoly and 'extraordinary privileges' of the European factors and merchants in India, 'as if they were even more than the natives'. The Indian cotton industry was also hit hard by the loss of the English market when England prohibited the import of Indian calico and silk at the beginning of the eighteenth century, by the East India Company's discouraging the manufacture of cloth goods of high counts and silk fabrics in India; and by the loss of her old markets in the Archipelago, Persia and Africa with the dwindling of the Indian mercantile marine. Towards the end of the eighteenth century, the annual average value (1786–1790) of Indian cotton piecegoods sold by the East Endia Company in the English market was £1.4 millions. France was importing annually at that time (1791) £1.2 millions worth of Indian cotton piecegoods; and a considerable quantity of these was also exported in American vessels (valued at Rs.5,600,000 in 1816–1817). Even as late as the beginning of the nineteenth century, in spite of the high tariff and the prohibition on the import of certain important varieties, India exported annually to England cotton piecegoods valued at about £2½ millions, selling them at half the price of English cloth goods, which were still largely woven on hand-looms employing about five times as many workers as were employed on the new power looms.

The Industrial Decline of India

The year 1700, exactly a century after the establishment of the English and Dutch Companies, saw the prohibition of import of Indian calicoes to England. Duties to protect the English weaving industry against Indian products were gradually raised to about 80 per cent. Other countries of Europe followed suit, to protect their domestic industries. The nadir of India's industrial decline was reached in the middle of the nineteenth century, when the export of

Indian cotton piecegoods and silk to Europe ceased entirely, and raw cotton began to be exported instead. Charles Trevelyan estimated in 1839 that the amount of Bengal piecegoods displaced in the foreign market was about Rs. 1 crore a year, and in the home market the displacement was to the extent of Rs. 80 lakhs. He referred to the gravity of the problem of unemployment among the Indian people, who worked up this great annual amount of Rs. 180 lakhs. Seven years later (1841) Labouchere, Chancellor of the Exchequer in England, observed: 'The British have utterly destroyed the manufactures of India by their manufactures. The district of Dacca, the Manchester of India, has dwindled into insignificance before the strides which the British goods have made'. By 1846 the tables were completely turned and India did not export any cotton goods at all, but had to import from England 213,840,000 yards of cloth, as compared with fifty-one million yards in 1835 and only eight lakh yards in 1814. India's de-industrialisation, her increasing dependence upon agriculture, and the severity of a series of famines, now exposed for the first time the weakness of her economic structure, which had arisen from her political dependence.

Rammohan, the Father of the Modern Indian Renaissance

From the very start the pattern of Anglo-Indian relations came to be dominated successively by European mercantilism, colonialism and nationalism—three of the world's pernicious myths, which warped the development of Western civilization for three centuries. With the cultural side of the British occupation kept in the background, and colonial policy permeating every sphere of administration, a rapid industrial decline set in, along with a marked deterioration in the standard of living of the people. This obtained philosophical support from the prevailing *laissez-faire* doctrine in Britain, which excluded the State from assuming educational and ameliorative responsibilities for half a century after the assumption of Dewani. Not before the drafting of the famous Despatch of 1854 was the necessity for State patronage of education in the vernaculars realised, although the efforts of British missionaries had contributed effectively to the spread of English education.

In 1799, the British missionary William Carey established himself at Serampur, on Danish territory, where he was more welcome than in the territory of the East India Company. It was there that the first

Indian press was started, publishing many books in Bengali prose, including translations of Sanskrit texts. Previous to this, a madrasa had been founded by Warren Hastings at Calcutta in 1781, and a Sanskrit College by Lord Cornwallis at Banaras in 1782. From the end of the eighteenth century the ground was being, indeed, gradually prepared for the notion of trusteeship of a dominion. In 1773 the first regulating Statutes were passed which altered the duties of the British from traders to administrators. In 1813, when the East India Company's Charter was renewed, its monopoly of trade was abolished and a sum of £10,000 was allocated for the improvement of literature and the introduction of education. The year 1817 saw the establishment of the Hindu College, or rather school, at Calcutta, thanks to the efforts of David Hare, Rammohan Roy and Dwarikanath Tagore. The next year saw the printing of the first Bengali newspaper. In 1833 the East India Company ceased to function as a trading concern; and the same year witnessed the proclamation of the policy of employing Indians in the higher branches of the Civil Service as a matter of principle. The Charter Act of 1833, which introduced these momentous changes, was largely due to the effort of Rammohan Roy.

Rammohan Roy (1774–1833) may be considered as the first of the Indian moderns and the father of the Indian Renaissance of the present age. He was an intellectual giant, and one of the great humanists of the nineteenth century. His spiritual calibre and influence equalled, indeed, those of the famous European leaders of thought. Jeremy Bentham acclaimed him as 'his intensely admired and deeply beloved collaborator in the service of mankind'. Rammohan condemned the idolatry and superstitions of popular Hinduism, and going back to the pure and noble creed of the Upaniṣads and Vedānta founded the Brahma Sabhā, for 'the worship and adoration of the Eternal, Unsearchable and Immortal Being who is the Author and Preserver of the Universe'. Besides condemning unequivocally many corruptions of the Hindu religion, he did not accept either the divinity of Christ or the authenticity of the various miracles attributed to Him in the Bible. He fought against the custom of Sati, or the self-immolation of a widow on her husband's funeral pyre, and advocated the rights of women with great acumen and moral fervour. With his support Lord Bentinck took the bold step of declaring Sati illegal. He also advocated the freedom of the press and the codification of the Indian Criminal Code, and protested against the injustice and impropriety of the land system introduced by the British.

In the sphere of education, Rammohan wrote the famous 'petition' that was largely responsible for the final decision to advance Western education in India through the medium of the English language; while his plea for the cultivation of the natural sciences was far ahead of his age. He wrote that, 'if it had been intended to keep the British nation in ignorance of real knowledge, the Baconian philosophy would not have been allowed to displace the system of the schoolmen, which was best calculated to perpetuate ignorance. In the same manner the Sanskrit system of education would be the best calculated to perpetuate ignorance if such had been the policy of the British Legislature. But as the improvement of the native population is the object of government it will consequently promote a more liberal and enlightened policy of instruction'. With his implicit faith in a liberal English education, Rammohan pleaded for the admission of Indians to the highest offices of state; and it was largely through his influence that the Charter Act of 1833, which terminated the commercial character of the East India Company and legalised the appointment of Indians to the highest posts, was passed.

In his familiarity with Sanskrit, Persian, Arabic, English, Greek and Hebrew, Rammohan was a true prophet not merely of Indian nationalism, which became the dominant movement about half a century after his death, but also of the internationalism of the twentieth century. It is refreshing to read the following plea of the Rājā for the brotherhood of mankind: 'It is now generally admitted that not religion only but unbiassed common sense, as well as the accurate deductions of scientific research, lead to the conclusion that all mankind are one great family, of which the numerous nations and tribes are only various branches. Hence enlightened men in all countries feel a wish to encourage and facilitate human intercourse in every manner by removing as far as possible all impediments to it, in order to provide the reciprocal advantage and enjoyment of the whole race'.

Bankim Chandra, the Father of Modern Indian Fiction

The age which in Britain saw the triumph of Liberalism and Individualism, the abolition of slavery, the introduction of far-reaching social legislation, and the religious revival associated with Wesley, Keble and Newman, saw in India the rapid spread of Western learning through the English language, based on Macaulay's

famous minute on education of 1834. English education not only became the unifier of the different provinces and religions, with their different dialects, but also created new values and patterns of expression in the provincial literatures, which now all entered their modern phase.

The greatest literary genius of the nineteenth century in India was Bankim Chandra Chaṭṭopādhyāya (1830–1894), the father of modern Indian fiction, whose novels had a stimulating effect on all Indian literatures, besides Bengali. Profoundly influenced by the English romantic movement, Bankim through his historical novels brought the past to life and depicted the glories of Hindu heroism against foreign tyranny with warm human fervour, which at once opened new vistas of beauty and imagination to the Indian people and aroused their national spirit. In his social novels, too, Bankim struck a tender passionate note, dealing with the problems of widowhood, incompatibility in marriage, and physical defect. In all his works his heroes and heroines, the daily occurrences and the human relations are suffused with a radiance from another world, where Kāpālikas, Bhairavīs and Fakirs, as well as dreams, play their dramatic rôle. His famous 'Ānandamaṭh', which has the devastating Bengal famine of 1769–70 and the Sannyasi Rebellion of 1772 as its background, and whose theme is political revolution, was far ahead of its time, and has since served as the gospel of the revolutionary movement. It contains the famous hymn of Indian nationalism, Bande Mātaram, sung to the Mother goddess, who is conceived as the Spirit of Mother India in her various manifestations, now poor and gaunt, now rich and bestowing gifts, but always charming and powerful, and demanding the devotion and sacrifice of her millions of sons and daughters.

The contemporary romantic spirit in European literature was the main inspiration, whether of Bankim Chandra, and later on of Madhusudhan Dutt and Ramesh Chandra Dutt, or of Hari Narayan Apte and C. L. Narsiṃham, who all brought the rosy and heroic past of India to her drab present of poverty and slavery, and who aroused national feeling in the country, as Walter Scott did in Scotland, Sienkiewicz in Poland, and Jirásek in Czechoslavakia. But the historical novel in every provincial literature soon gave place to not very successful attempts at social themes, by Bankim Chatterjee and Taraknath Ganguli in Bengali, by Veresalingam in Telugu, by Apte and Khandikar in Marathi, by Kishorilal Goswami in Hindi, and by others in the other literatures. This failure was largely due to the

limitations of the Indian social milieu, with its rigid family and caste restrictions, which were quite incompatible with the new ideas of freedom and equality that had come in the wake of the French and American Revolutions. The narrow conservative outlook of the upper middle class was no less responsible for the way in which the integrity of a character or the natural development of a situation was sacrificed to the needs of bourgeois morals and manners and of British liberalism and individualism in many a social novel, even of the great masters. Dramas and social satires were also attempted, lashing outworn social customs as well as modern vices, and these gradually superseded the older mythological themes. Girish Chandra in Bengali, Vishnudas Bhave in Marathi and Harischandra in Hindi, for instance, produced mythological plays at first. The historical dramas of Girish Ghosh, Kshirod Vidyabinode and Dwijendralal Ray, and of Kirtane, gained greater popularity; but social plays and satires, such as those of Amritalal Bose and S. Mudaliar, eliciting tears and mirth, became much more lively and vigorous in every provincial literature.

The Influence of Rabindranath Tagore

In poetry the most striking common note in all the Indian literatures is romantic fervour and passion and an exaggerated subjectivism, where these have freed themselves from the traditional mystical devotional pose and context. European nature poetry has also been thoroughly imbibed and assimilated. But a far more potent influence on the poetry of the various provinces is that of Tagore's romanticism and his profound love—a continuation of the Vālmīki tradition—of the beauty and wealth of Mother Earth and Nature in the succession of the seasons and the hours of day and night. In Tagore the love of Nature, the love of Man and the world, and the love of God, are accents of the same intense awareness of the cosmic infinite Whole. Where Tagore's mature lyricism or philosophical poetry has provided the model, whether in Bengal or in the other provinces, it has inspired authentic spiritual expression; although this may still lack Tagore's exquisite metre and verbal rhythm in Bengali. Furthermore, his burning indignation against social inequity, and his sympathy for the victims of social injustice and caste barriers in his novels and short stories, has stimulated everywhere a realistic handling of social issues in poetry, drama and fiction. A new mode of literary expression is represented in both Bengal and elsewhere by

rural folk-poetry, which draws its inspiration from the ancient ballads and folk-songs; and also, by proletarian fiction, which utilises the folk dialects.

The Socio-religious Movements of the Nineteenth Century

As the nineteenth century progressed, the social conquest of India by Britain was challenged in various fields. Controversies with Christian missionaries as well as active programmes of social reform stimulated interest in the study of Indian social life and institutions, especially caste, family and religion. Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Bhudeva Chandra Mookerjee, Iswar Chandra Vidyāsāgara, and Akshoy Kumar Dutta in Bengal, and B. N. Malabari, M. G. Ranade, and R. G. Bhandarkar in Western India, were among the influential writers who appraised Indian social institutions afresh, opposed the introduction of Western ways, and re-interpreted the social values and ideals of the past. A few liberal British administrators, such as Metcalfe and Maine, dealing with the village communities of India, Alfred Lyall, concerned with tribal law and administration, and Munro, exploring the methods and agencies of education, stood out against the supersession of ancient institutions and communal principles and commented critically on British legal and administrative policy. At least four socio-religious movements of reform and service arose, each promulgating its own social adjustment to the civilization of the West in consonance with ancient traditions and values, which were freshly interpreted for the purpose: the Brahmo Samaj, led by the Tagores and Keshab Chandra Sen; the Arya Samaj, led by Dayananda Sarasvati; the Theosophical Society, led by Annie Besant; and the Ramkrishna Mission, under Swami Vivekananda. In Bengal the political and revolutionary movements were saturated with a national idealism which expressed itself in a lively interest in folk-culture, in rural life and institutions, folk songs and arts and crafts.

The Facets of Nationalism

All these movements deepened and spiritualised Indian nationalism, striking a higher, more idealistic note, like that of Mazzini in Italy and Masaryk in Czecho-slovakia, under the leader-

ship of Surendranath Banerjee (1848–1925), who devoted to the national cause his unique gifts of amazing eloquence and great vigour for a whole life-time. With the campaigns of Banerjee, who is sometimes compared with Burke, and sometimes with Gladstone, Indian politics were born. The Indian National Congress gave modern India for the first time 'the conception of a united India, derived from the inspiration of Mazzini', to use his own words. The rallying symbol and inspiring hymn of the nationalist movement was supplied by what later became the National Anthem of India, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's 'Bande Mātaraṃ', taken from his historical novel, 'Ānandamaṭh', which deals with the Sannyasi rebellion against the plunder and oppression of the revenue farmers in the 'robber state' established by Clive in Bengal. In this hymn the image of the Great Mother Durgā was transformed into that of Mother India, her different manifestations, as Jagaddhātrī, Kālī, Lakṣmī and Sarasvatī, symbolising the various phases of the nation's evolution, and bringing home to the masses the message of the new cult of the Motherland. Much of the nationalism, as preached from one end of the country to the other by such nationalist leaders as Bepin Chandra Pal, Aurobindo Ghosh and Bal Gangadhar Tilak, linked the fight for Swarāj with a spiritual awakening, an ideal which was later accepted by the Indian National Congress, and thus reconciled the concepts of political self-determination and individual salvation. In Maharashtra the resuscitation of the cults of Bhavānī and Ganesh, and of the Śivāji movement under the guidance of Tilak, similarly gave a moral and spiritual slant to the fight for independence. In redefining the message of the Bhagavad-Gītā, Bankim Chandra, Tilak and Aurobindo, and later Gandhi, emphasised purposive action and organised effort for the welfare of the people as the modern ideal of karma-yoga. All this re-interpretation brought Congress nearer to the masses by presenting political doctrines in the vernacular of ancient spiritual conceptions, thus spiritualising politics, and at the same time eliciting the martyrdom of revolutionaries in a widely ramifying underground movement in the country.

The agitation and the political programme of the Congress liberals, from Surendranath Banerjee, Pheroze Shah Mehta, Romesh Chandra Dutta and Ananda Mohan Bose to Gopal Krishna Gokhale, Dadabhai Naoroji and Madan Mohan Malaviya, were strengthened by the self-sacrificing spirit of a long line of idealists and revolutionaries. The spiritual note of the later nationalist movement in the country was inspired largely by their devotion and martyrdom. Not only did

Bengal make India accept the economic programme of Swadeshi and the boycott of British goods, but Indian cultural nationalism also received a great accession of strength from the wide cultural background of the mass movement against Lord Curzon's partition of the Province. During this period Gokhale observed: 'What Bengal thinks today, India thinks tomorrow'. The technique of economic and social boycott and the establishment of gymnasia and resistance centres throughout the Province transformed the nationalist into a revolutionary movement. On the cultural side the National Council of Education, established in Bengal in 1906 as a protest against the type of university education that was manufacturing only clerks and 'slaves', and which was led by veteran scholars and educationists, such as Satis Chandra Mukerji, Gooroodas Banerji, Rabindranath Tagore, Rasbihari Ghosh, A. Chaudhury, Hirendranath Dutta and Benoy Kumar Sarkar, fostered a new intellectual freedom, a zeal for work among the masses in city slums and depressed rural areas, and a 'Back to the Village' movement. Ten years later the Banaras Hindu University was founded with the object of promoting the study and conservation of Indian culture. During this period, too, again from Bengal, came the movement for the revival of Indian art, which utilised the developed techniques and skills of the West to recover and re-orientate in the new social context the motifs and formal values of ancient and medieval Indian art, especially painting. The artistic renaissance, led by Abanindranath Tagore, Nandalal Bose and Asit Kumar Haldar, was soon flourishing in various art schools and centres throughout India, helping to re-educate the Indian eye in the perception of beauty, after many decades swamped with cheap and shoddy specimens of European art, and also discovering new forms of artistic expression.

The Freedom Movement

By this time, Swadeshi, Swarāj and national education, supported by the economic boycott of British goods, had become the basic constructive programme of Congress—accepted by both the moderates and the extremists, the two wings of the political movement. Leadership soon shifted to Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, whom India in reverence and devotion afterwards called Mahatma Gandhi and the Father of the Nation. Mahatma Gandhi imported into politics novel techniques, applying truth, soul-force and non-violence

(Satyāgraha) as formative and directive factors in vast mass movements. His appeal to moral power against injustice and inequality, without anger and without malice, harnessed for the Indian freedom movement the spiritual values of her immemorial civilization. Not less significant than Gandhian politics was Gandhian economics, with its emphasis on a humane socialism, grounded not on class conflict but on amity and goodwill, simplification of living, and decentralisation, symbolised by the return to the spinning-wheel and the panchayat-raj.

The leadership of Subhas Chandra Bose, on the other hand, was cast in a very different mould. In the history of the world's revolutions there has hardly been a more outstanding dramatic figure than this courageous leader, who ransacked the whole globe, from Berlin to Tokyo and from Rome to Singapore, in order to harness forces for a War of Indian Independence, and to strike the final blow at his adversary in Delhi. His Azad Hind Government, founded in Japan in 1943 with the assistance of Rasvihari Bose, won the allegiance of some two million Indians in the Far East and was recognised by the Axis powers. It adopted the slogans 'Jai Hind' and 'Delhi Chalo', burning with the determination to fly the Indian tri-colour on a victory parade in the ancient Red Fort of India's metropolis. It ruled the Andamans and Nicobars and also the Indian territory conquered by the Azad Hind forces, including the Kohima, Manipur and Vishnupur areas, comprising about 1,500 square miles. After the defeat of Japan the principal officers of the Azad Hind forces were brought to India as prisoners, for trial at the Red Fort in Delhi. This trial not only gave impetus to the revolutionary forces but also spread marked discontent and disaffection among the regulars. The August 1942 rebellion, after the incarceration of Mahatma Gandhi and his associate Congress leaders, as well as the sympathy of the Indian population with the Indian national army, and with the naval risings in Bombay, Karachi and Madras in 1945 and 1946, ultimately led to the decision of the British, though not before the terrible famine in Bengal, which took a toll of fifty-three lakhs of lives, to 'quit India', as demanded by the Congress executive under the leadership of the Father of the Nation.

Democratic Socialism

The independence of India, achieved with the consent of the British people and without bloodshed on the 15th August, 1947, has

brought to the fore certain insistent political and economic problems. The partition of the country was a disaster; for it made vulnerable its strategic north-western and north-eastern frontiers. Feebleness on the north-western frontier, beyond the Indus, or foreign occupation of the Kabul and Indus valleys, the Punjab, and Kāśmīra, has been the historic cause of the country's disintegration and the disruption of its civilization through the ages. The partition is doubly disastrous owing to the estrangement of the two neighbours, who have often made common cause in the fight for freedom in the long, chequered march of Indian history, and to the migration to India of about nine million Hindus as refugees. Inside India, the absorption of 600 Indian States, pockets of feudalism, autocracy and social reaction, into the Indian Union has made the country, thanks to the foresight and statesmanship of Sardar Vallabbhai Patel, larger and more vigorous than she was in many historic Empires. The merging of princely or medieval and modern or democratic India will contribute mightily to the national strength and to economic planning and development.

The Constitution of the Republic, framed in 1950, has as its objectives freedom from want, the improvement of the standard of living of the masses, communal unity and the removal of untouchability, in a secular state. Such aims can be fully realised only through a reform of the land system, involving the removal of all intermediaries between the peasant and the state, and the nationalisation of key and basic industries and services—in other words, through democratic socialism. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the Prime Minister, is the convinced leader and exponent of this movement, which can truly fashion an Indian peasant democracy and safeguard and develop the values and virtues of India's agricultural civilization. He has declared: 'Our ultimate aim is a classless society in which economic inequality and injustice of any kind will disappear, and all will obtain equal advantages and opportunities'. The middle class built up the Indian National Congress and ultimately wrested power from the British. It is not their wealth and ambition now but their sagacity and self-sacrifice that can solve the insistent problems bequeathed by an archaic society—its feudal elements, caste prejudices and communal discriminations. Such problems are in the long run more economic than political, more social than economic. Under Nehru's leadership emphasis is shifting from party programme to economic plan, and from economic welfare to basic social justice, as power also moves imperceptibly from Congress to Parliament and the cabinet.

The vast modern Indian political experiment is directed towards a renovated economic and social equality within the ambit of a free society.

The Ancient Ideal of Absolute Justice

India's social egalitarian ideal springs from the ancient and basic Vedāntic notion of the divinity of Man and the humanity of God. Of lasting influence on human affairs across the centuries, indeed across the millenniums, are the philosophy of the Upaniṣads and the Vedānta in India (800–500 B.C.), including the Vedāntic thought of the Buddha (563–483 B.C.), and that of Confucius in China (551–479 B.C.), which shaped the history of their respective Oriental lands for two millenniums and a half; the philosophy of Socrates, Plato and Aristotle (470–322 B.C.), which moulded Occidental civilization for about the same period; and the philosophy of Hegel (1770-1831), with its offshoot Marxism, which has dominated the Occident for only about a century. In the contemporary West, Hegel's dialectic, enforced by Marx's acceptance for his own purposes of the former's vision of the triad, thesis, antithesis and synthesis, has inspired the political and psychological strategy of communism. In India the basic Vedāntic idea is similarly transformed into a social relation, into a skill in activity (yogaḥ karmasu kauśalaṃ). Should dialectical materialism lead the peoples of the world towards the struggles and battlefields of global revolution and war? Or should the true dialectic of the human mind, that of Vedānta metaphysics, which gradually widens and deepens the understanding through a greater inclusiveness of ideas and a profounder perception of their truth and value, and which finally culminates through intuition in the Absolute, direct mankind along the paths of peace, co-operation and goodwill?

A most vivid and ancient formulation of the universal law of Dharma, Ideal Righteousness, or Justice, based on metaphysical equality, is found in the exposition of the Doctrine of Elixir (Madhuvidyā) in the Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad, one of the rich sources of Vedāntic thought. 'This Absolute Righteousness or Justice (Dharma), which directs the universe and society and the aggregate of the human body and its organs, which is practised by the people and controls even kings, is the Elixir of all beings and all beings are its Elixir. That resplendent, immortal Ātman-Brahman, who is in this Righteousness, is born of this Righteousness. He is within you. He is just

the Self of yours, the Immortal, this All'. It is Dharma, or Absolute Righteousness, or Justice, that is at the heart of every individual, that is the Eternal and Immortal, that reshapes the rules and regulations of society from age to age. The latter are the transient and mortal garb of the cosmic eternal principles. Yet without their embodiment in life and society, neither individual nor society can reach supreme Bliss (madhu). The ancient Upaniṣadic conception of Ideal Justice or Righteousness as Harmony, Bliss or Truth, which encompasses and controls the world, is of rich significance for modern society, aiming at an egalitarian structure.

The Buddha, perhaps the greatest man ever born, and the noblest fighter and renovator of Indian Dharma and society, observed in the Saṃyutta-nikāya that the Dharma he preached was merely the traversing of an ancient Road, discovering and reconstructing an old, flourishing, but now deserted City. History is the exploration of the ancient Road, the forgotten City and the ruined Mansion of God, trodden and occupied by the peoples and philosophers of bygone ages, and the rebuilding of them for the present generation, so that its life may become richer and nobler. It is the re-discovery of the omnipresent, immemorial Dharma of the land and its unity through past, present and future; woven by the interplay of the desires and aspirations of man (guṇas), it belongs to the transient, phenomenal world. Through and beyond history is the Eternal Dharma, which pertains not only to the duties and obligations of the individual, but also to those of a people and of mankind. Dharma binds not only the historical epochs of a particular nation but the different nations of the world in a broad common movement of civilization.

EPILOGUE

The Identity of Land and Dharma

THE basic Indian historic ideal across the centuries, particularly stressed in those epochs when the country encountered invasion and aggression from outside, is that the land is Dharma and Dharma is the land. This has been the precious gift of the Ṛig-Vedic Aryans to the sub-continent. The fundamental conceptions that Bhārata and Dharma are identical and that neither Dharma nor its favoured homeland can perish, in spite of the vicissitudes of history, have kept alive the faith of the people in political crises and defeats through the millenniums. These were strongly reinforced in the spacious epoch of Gupta imperialism by Purāṇic myths and institutions. The name Bhārata for the country was also first made current by the latter. The invasions of India were never like avalanches sweeping away every state, institution and culture before them; and so in spite of the vulnerability of her north-western frontiers she hardly ever developed a racialism or nationalism of the European pattern. On the whole, conquests and shiftings of races are in fact much less evident in the march of history in India than in Europe.

The loss of the north-west frontier from Kandahar to Kashmir and Peshawar to Samarkhand has always threatened the peace and unity of India through the ages. On the other hand, Indian culture, religion and trade mightily influenced Central Asia and China, in those periods when she controlled the Inner Asian land-routes. It was these roads across mountains and deserts that were the channels through which the religions and arts of India, China, Iran and the Middle East powerfully but peacefully influenced one another; while they were also crossed and recrossed by barbarian invaders from the prairies and dry grasslands in search of wealth and comfort in the warm, fertile lands of the periphery. Akbar's minister Abul Fazl remarked: 'The wise of ancient times considered Kabul and Kandhar as the Firm gates of Hindostan, the one leading to Turkestan and the other to Persia. The custody of those highways secured India from foreign

invaders and they are likewise the appropriate portals to foreign travel'. Britain after her conquest of India sealed the north-western land-routes to ensure stability and security, and thus isolated the country from the rest of Asia; but not before she had sent Alexander Burnes as early as 1831 to Afghanistan to carry out negotiations with the State preliminary to the despatch of an expeditionary force, which occupied Kandahar, Ghazni and Kabul in 1838. This was followed by a rebellion in Afghanistan, the disastrous retreat of the British Army from Kabul to Jelalabad, Lord Ellenborough's revenge and plunder of Kabul, and the ultimate withdrawal from the Afghan 'Hornet's nest'. It was only after the Second Afghan War (1878–1880), however, precipitated by Russia's approach to the Indian borderlands, that Britain's aggressive policy and attempt to secure a strategic frontier in the valley of the Kabul and extend her influence in Central Asia was abandoned. The political isolation of India is the great landmark which separates India's present from her past.

India's Historic Contribution to the Unity of Asia

Thrice in the course of her history, India was able to give lasting unity to a considerable part of Asia. For the first time from about the beginning of this millennium up to the fourth century A.D., when Buddhism, after Gandhāra and the entire Indo-Iranian borderland from Kandahar to Bactria (described as 'White India' by the Greeks) had been converted by the Aśokan missionaries, conquered Central Asia or 'Serindia' and North China; for the second time, during the Golden Age of Gupta culture, which extended for about half a millennium, from the fourth to the eighth century A.D., when Mahāyāna Buddhism spread from Jālandhara and Gandhāra to Western Asia, Turkestan and China, and Hindu colonies and kingdoms rose in South-Eastern Asia, from Suvarṇadvīpa to Kambuja; and for the third time, when the Tāntrika renaissance of culture and art in Gauḍa, which covered another half a millennium, from the eighth to the end of the thirteenth century A.D., extended under the Palas to Nepal, Tibet, Further India and Indonesia. For well-nigh twenty centuries India through her scriptures, Buddhist, Brāhmanical, Tāntrika and Siddha-Nātha, as well as her noble works of art, effected a silent and peaceful dissemination of her morals, manners and culture among the less advanced peoples of Central and South-eastern Asia, from Syria to Kambuja and from Korea to Ceylon.

Buddhism brought about a cultural and spiritual unity of almost the whole continent of Asia for at least a thousand years, just as Christianity did in Europe; and the entire Buddhist world used Sanskrit as the common language, as Europe used Latin. Great universities in different countries in Asia, such as Nālandā, Vikramaśīla and Valabhī in India, Navasaṅghārāma in Balkh, Gomatī-vihāra in Khotan, Ch'ang-an, Lo-yang and Nanking in China, Anurādhapur in Ceylon, Śrī Vijaya in Sumatra and Dvārāvatī in Siam, taught in the same language and elaborated the same myths and cults for centuries. Similarly Sarnath, Mathura, Ajanta, Gandhāra and Amarāvatī in India, Yun-kang and Tun-huang in China, Horyuji in Japan, Angkor Thom in Cambodia, Borobodur in Java, Pagan in Burma and Sigiriya in Ceylon recorded similar noble visions of beauty and compassion in stone. It was only the conversion to Islam in the fifteenth century and the threat to Indian shipping from Portuguese piracy in the sixteenth that broke the ancient cultural ties between India and South-east Asia.

The Fundamental Unity of Āryāvarta

India's historic contributions to Asian unity came about through the extension beyond her borders of her ancient spirit of universalism, her religious conceptions of the Universal Man and the Universal Community and her political doctrine of a Universal Culture State, by which she could weld together on her own soil divergent races and cultures, many of whom were enemies and foreigners—Yavanas, Yue-chis, Śakas, Pārasikas and Hūṇas. The Brāhmanical predilection for symmetry in every sphere of existence led the scholastics to adopt and elaborate the fiction of Varṇasaṅkara (intermixture of varṇas), which opened the gates of Hindu society to both the foreign Mlechchhas and the indigenous Ājīvas (artisan groups). The list of mixed castes started by Gautama and Āpastamba (sixth to fourth century B.C.) was enormously expanded by Baudhāyana and Manu (about the fifth century A.D.). Manu's Vrātyas and Vṛiṣalas approximate to the Yavanas or Pārasīkas assimilated to Hinduism. 'The Śūdra is the fourth varṇa; there is no fifth varṇa', Manu declares. Parāśara, who flourished in the Gupta period, gave status not only to the Śūdras, but to the foreign stocks and the semi-Hinduised border peoples. The famous commentator on Manu, Medhātithi, asserted five centuries later that the Hindu scheme

of life grounded itself only on Dharma, which is essential in the conception of Āryāvarta, and not on geographical demarcation. He observes: 'A king of meritorious conduct could conquer even the land of the Mlechchhas, establish Chāturvarṇya there, assign to the Mlechchhas a position occupied by the Chāṇḍālas in Āryāvarta, and render that land as fit for sacrifice as Āryāvarta itself'. It is thus culture, i.e., the way of living according to Dharma, which defines and consolidates the unity of Āryāvarta—karmabhūmi, or the land of rites and sacraments *par excellence*, and not bhogabhūmi, or the land of pleasures, as the Viṣṇu-purāṇa envisaged her.

In spite of her varied climate, soil and topography, and the differences among her races and peoples, the fundamental unity of Bhāratavarṣa is instilled into the Indian mind by the ancient Purāṇas, Dharma-śāstras, poems, temples, pageants and pilgrimages. Thus Bhāratavarṣa is not a mere geographical integration. She is a historic cultural synthesis. The sacred cities, lakes, rivers and mountains of Bhāratavarṣa are distributed throughout the length and breadth of the continent, including sites in the Himalayas as well as in the far south up to the Setubandha. The most famous temples of the ancient deities of India, Viṣṇu, Śiva and the Mother-goddess, are scattered throughout the land and in almost every important village. Indian literature, religion, philosophy, art and ritual, as well as the universal and eternal Smṛiti law, interpreted by the universities, scholastic schools and courts of law, including those of the English, have sustained one code of manners, morals and law, one status-prestige system of varṇāśrama, and one scholastic tradition. Neither Muslim nor English suzerainty materially affected the fundamental unity of Indian culture.

Like the Vedic conception of the holy land and the holy society, the political conception of a Universal State (ekādhirājya) under a Sārva-bhauma or Chakravartī monarch, which also stems from the Vedic age, has been a great unifier of the Indian peoples. The notion of the Chakravartī of Āryāvarta was revived by the Imperial Mauryas and Guptas, and indeed by all later aspirants to imperial dominion in Āryāvarta, such as Yaśodharman, the Maukharis, the princes of the Puṣyabhūti dynasty and the Pālas, some of whom assumed the title 'Vikramāditya', as well as by the Imperial Pratihāras and new Raghukula Chakravartis and Sāhasāṅkas of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, who valiantly fought against the Muslim invaders. The notion of a Chakravartī monarch such as Māndhātā and Bharata among the Brāhmans and Dalhanemi and Mahāsudassana among the

Buddhists is not merely political but also cultural. It is the Chakravarti Samrāṭ who, amidst chaos and confusion, establishes the empire of Dharma, or righteousness, and promulgates the essential code of the Dharma-śāstra. India's approach to politics is essentially metaphysical; her ideal is the building up of a cultural state through prosperity and discipline rather than an empire by the might of arms. The Conception of Chakravarti is defined thus in the Vāyu-Purāṇa: Chakravartis are born in each age as the essence of Viṣṇu; they have lived in past ages and will come again in the future; in all the three ages—past, present and future—even in the tretā age, other Chakravartis have been and will be born.

'Strength, Dharma, happiness and wealth, wondrous blessings, shall characterise these rulers. They will enjoy wealth, plenty, Dharma, ambition, fame and victory in undisturbed harmony. They will excel the Ṛiṣis in their power to achieve results, by their lordliness, by providing prosperity and discipline. And they will excel the gods, demons and men by their strength and self-discipline'.

The Indian Spirit of Synthesis

Even in the midst of bitter struggles with foreign peoples establishing themselves on Indian soil, the genius of Indian culture was maintained; its spirit of assimilation, comprehension, and synthesis was able to meet the challenge of diversity and conflict. The great formative periods of Indian history, the significant religious, artistic and philosophical movements through the ages, throw into sharp relief India's persistent efforts at reconciliation and concord amidst political and racial conflicts and struggles that would have overwhelmed any other culture. This distinctive cultural pattern, the outcome of the accumulated forces of environment, tradition and race, has maintained a remarkable continuity for well-nigh five millenniums—a unique achievement in the history of the world. It has found articulate expression in India's basic metaphysical notions of the unity and solidarity of life, and of the Real, Universal Man (Viśvātman); her religious doctrines of the universality of creeds, sects and Dharma; her political conception of universal sovereignty (Sārva-bhauma), which upholds the universal Dharma; and her ethical conception of the commonalty of the earth community. Śaṅkara, the greatest Indian scholastic, asserts: 'My Mother is the Goddess Pārvatī; my Father is Śiva, the Lord whose power no one

can withstand; their worshippers I own as my kith and kin; and the three worlds are my native land (svadeśaḥ bhuvana-trayam)'.

No less than India's spirit of humanism and compassion, her ideal archetypes of Man—Viṣṇu, Śiva, Buddha, Bodhisattva, and Kṛiṣṇa—and of Woman—Pārvatī, Lakṣmī and Sarasvatī—as enshrined in the various icons and images of Indian art, have served to mould a common distinctive personality type, poetic and universal rather than egotistical and racial. The figures of Indian sculpture, whether Hindu, Buddhist or Jain, direct the people also to their supreme Man of Destiny, the Avatāra, the semi-divine Hero and emancipated Sage or Patriarch, who recurrently makes history, impregnates it with Messianic hope and restores the supremacy of Dharma. All such intuitions, faiths and beliefs embody India's age-long quest for unity and solidarity in a land marked out by its diversity.

Neither the spread of Greco-Roman institutions or of Christianity, nor the empires of Augustus, Charlemagne and Napoleon were able to produce in Europe the deep, underlying unity that is characteristic of India. This unity of civilization is far more potent than any brought about by the forces of race and region, nationalism or political suzerainty. Indian culture has stood at once for the infinite extension of the human community and for the plumbing of the deeper recesses of the self, identifying the one with the other; this is the common ideology behind the various systems of thought and the numerous forms of spiritual practice in the country. This is the central theme of Indian thought, the very core of her collective existence.

The Sources of Weakness and Strength

In the present crisis in the culture of India and the world this message is of profound significance. Indian independence needs protection today not only against the upsurge of provincialism, linguism and casteism, but also against the new class cleavage and struggle that have come in the wake of a middle class revolution. The spiritual heritage of India, as embodied in the Epics, Dharmaśāstras and Purāṇas, has revealed itself in the apprehension of an immemorial Dharma underlying her historic continuity. It has stimulated worship of the Mother-land as the embodiment of the eternal Dharma, literally and pragmatically interpreted in order to facilitate the assimilation of backward and under-privileged peoples and groups.

It has also inspired the morality of universal charity and compassion (sarva-bhūta-dayā), the spiritual ideal of universal salvation (sarva-mukti), and the cult of Ārtta or Daridra Nārāyaṇa, or God in the poverty-stricken, the handicapped and the afflicted in society. In the Mahābhārata Kṛiṣṇa declares: 'Know that Dharma is my beloved first-born spiritual son, whose nature is to have compassion on all creatures. In his character I exist among all men, both present and past, through many varieties and forms of existence for the preservation and establishment of righteousness'. These faiths are rich and abiding sources of political and moral strength. It is the ancient metaphysic of the Real Universal Man and the indwelling of God in every human being and relation (sarva-avatāra) that can safeguard under new conditions the majesty and dignity of the Common Man and inspire and strengthen movements for social justice and equality and the establishment of a socialist pattern of society.

Today the Indian constitution, which has created not a Federation but a Union with a strong centre and a compact administration, safeguarding the country against disintegration, is a most powerful political as well as moral binding force. It has incorporated into itself certain fundamental rights and liberties of the Common Man of India that the British law and administrative procedures, and the French, American and Russian revolutions have added to the religious content of Indian nationalism. It is a great new instrument not merely of political integration but also of social planning which will constantly enlarge its contents and broaden the scope of economic and social democracy.

Essentially India's history in the future lies in strengthening and maintaining the basic unity and integrity of Indian civilization, which transcends the diversities of race, language and manners of her different regions. India, welding together her Provinces and States into a democratic republic, is once again in the course of re-birth. The fulfilment of her history of five thousand years depends solely upon national idealism and ardent faith in the essential unity of Indian civilization and its historic, peaceful, cultural mission across the centuries. All cultures will be judged in this hazardous atomic age according to their rôle in the establishment of justice, peace and order in a global society. In this scale of judgment the values of Indian civilization, properly presented and interpreted against the background of the past, can help to provide the basis of universal peace, genuine internationalism and a world civilization befitting the human race. As Gandhi wrote:

'I feel in the innermost recesses of my heart . . . that the world is sick unto death of blood-spilling. The world is seeking a way out, and I flatter myself with the belief that perhaps it will be the privilege of the ancient land of India to show that way out to the hungering world'.

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3. Woodward, F. L.: Some Sayings of the Buddha.
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9. Payne: The Śāktas of Bengal.
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2. Kumarappa, B.: The Hindu Conception of Deity, as culminating in Ramanuja.

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13. Vivekananda: Bhakti Yoga.
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1. Majumdar, R. C.: Ancient Indian Colonies in the Far East, 2 Vols.
2. Wales, H. G. Q.: The Making of Greater India.
3. May, R. Le: The Culture of South-East Asia.
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6. Zimmer, H.: Myths and Symbols in Indian Art and Civilization.
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10. Bachhofer, L.: Early Indian Sculpture, 2 Vols.
11. Kramrisch, Stella: Indian Sculpture.
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13. Rowland, B.: The Art and Architecture of India.
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3. Raverty, H. G. (Tr.): Tabaqat-i-Nasiri.
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18. Sarkar, B. K.: Positive Background of Hindu Sociology.
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TIME-CHART OF INDIAN CIVILIZATION

2800 B.C.	Indus Valley cylinder seals from Tell Asmar and a steatite vase from Tell Agrub.	*The Dawn of Civilization in India* (*c.* 3000–1000).
2700	Indus Valley seals from Kish.	
2800–2500	Pottery jar with a Sumero-Babylonian inscription from Mohenjo-daro.	
	Indus Valley seals bearing the prototype of Śiva-Paśupati, Lord of the Animals, and terracottas indicating worship of the Great Mother.	
2000–1000	Advent of the Aryans in the Sapta-Sarasvatī.	*Vedic Culture* (*c.* 1500–800).
c. 1375	Four Ṛigvedic gods worshipped in Asia Minor.	
	The Bharatas on the Sapta-Sarasvatī.	
	The Ṛigvedic hymns and seers.	
c. 1000	The Mahābhārata.	
	Kṛiṣṇa. Janaka, Pravāhaṇa Jaivali, Yājñavalkya.	
	Kapila.	
c. 817	Pārśvanātha.	
	The Vedic Brāhmaṇas and Āraṇyakas.	
c. 660–350	The Upaniṣads.	*The Age of Philosophies: Vedānta, Buddhism and Jainism.* (*c.* 600–400).
599–527	Mahāvīra Vardhamāna.	
	Maskarī Gosāla, founder of the Ājīvika sect, which survived until at least the thirteenth century.	
563–483	The Buddha.	

c. 6th century	Vālmīki.	
c. 500	The Gṛihya Sūtras, Dharma Sūtras and Śulva Sūtras.	
483	The first Buddhist Council at Rājagṛiha.	
c. 450	Pāṇini.	
400	The Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata (with the Bhagavad Gītā in its present form). Identification of Bhārata with the language and culture of the Bharatas (Bhāratī).	
	Rise of Bhāgavatism and Śaivism.	
383	The Second Buddhist Council at Vaiśālī.	
322–184	The Maurya Empire.	*The Maurya Renaissance and the First Indian Empire* (*c.* 322–150).
	Kauṭilya's Arthaśāstra.	
	Manumission of slaves. Stress laid on the privileges of Aryahood. Crystallisation of caste among the five hīna jātis, or low tribes.	
	Reaction against Buddhist asceticism and reinterpretation of the varṇāśrama dharma.	
c. 3rd to 2nd century	Vātsyāyana's Kāmasūtra.	
c. 300	The first Jain Council at Pāṭaliputra.	
c. 273–232	Aśoka and his missions of spiritual conquest to Syria, Egypt and Macedonia in the West, and to Nepal, Ceylon and Suvarṇabhūmi in the East. The planting of an offshoot from the Bodhi tree in Ceylon by Saṅghamitrā. Aśoka's Pillars and Rock Edicts. Examples of Imperial Mauryan art: the lion capital of the Aśokan pillar at Sarnath; the bull capital on a pillar from Rampurva. Examples of folk art: the colossal Yakṣī from Didarganj; the elephant carved out of the rock at Dhauli.	

4th to 3rd century	Prevalence of the Kharoṣṭhi alphabet in the north-west.	
3rd century	Indian cultural expansion in the valleys of the Helmund, the Kabul, the Oxus and the Tarim. Seistan and Kabul known as 'White India'.	
3rd to 1st century	The Stupa at Sāñchī, decorated with small bas-reliefs bearing the Buddhist symbols and illustrating the Buddhist legends.	
3rd to 1st century	The Bactrian Greeks in Gandhāra and Śākala; their Indianisation.	*The Śaka-Yavana Interlude in the North-West* (*c.* 200 B.C. to end of millennium).
33 B.C. to A.D. 70	Śaka rule in Western India. Indo-Scythian sculpture at Mathurā. Sūrya images assume an essentially Scythian aspect.	
c. 180-150	Defeat of the Yavanas by Puṣyamitra Śuṅga and his celebration of two Horse Sacrifices.	*The Brāhmaṇical Renaissance under the Śuṅgas and the Sātavāhanas* (*c.* 150 to end of millennium).
c. 150	Patañjali's Mahābhāṣya. References to plays, Kaṃsabadha and Bali-bandha, indicating the popularity of Kṛṣṇa-Bhāgavatism, to animal sacrifices, to Rudra, and to the Pañcha-mahāyajñas.	
c. 150	Buddhist sculpture at Bharhut and Bodh-Gaya.	
c. 126	Visit of the Chinese Ambassador Chang-hien to the Yue-chis in the Oxus valley.	
120	The first through voyage from Egypt to India by Eudoxus.	
c. 113	The installation of Garuḍa-dhvaja by the Greek convert Heliodorus at Vidiśā.	
c. 100	'The Questions of Milinda'. Śākala as the meeting place of Yavana, Hindu and Buddhist philosophers and merchants.	
1st century B.C.	The Dharmaśāstra of Manu.	

89 to 40 B.C.	Writings of the Pali canon in the reign of Vaṭṭagāmani Abhaya in Ceylon.	
c. 60	Introduction of Buddhism into Khotan.	
50	The revival of Jainism in Kaliṅga under King Khāravela and his victory over the Indo-Greeks at Mathurā.	
c. 44 to 29	Rule of the Tamil kings in Siṅghala.	
c. 26 to 20	Embassies from South India to Emperor Augustus.	
2 B.C.	Presentation of Buddhist scriptures and images to the Chinese court by the Yue-chi rulers.	
1st century B.C. to 7th century A.D.	The sculpture and paintings of Ajanta, a national gallery of art that provided motifs and techniques to South and East Asia across the centuries.	
A.D. 45	Hippalus's discovery of the monsoon on the Arabian Sea.	
c. 65 B.C.	Introduction of Buddhism into China by Dharmaratna and Mātaṅga. The building of the first Buddhist monastery in China—the White Horse Monastery at Ch'ang-an	*The First Age of Asian Unity: the March of Buddhism on the Asian Mainland.* (c. 60 B.C.–A.D. 300).
75 B.C.	Colonisation of Java by prince Aji Śaka from Western India.	
c. 85	The birth of the Mahāyāna at the Kuṇḍalavana-vihāra during the reign of Kaniṣka (c. 78–101). Kaniṣka becomes a convert to Buddhism and builds a magnificent tower, enshrining Buddha relics, and a vihāra at his capital at Puruṣapura. Aśvaghoṣa, Dharmatrāta, Vasumitra, Pārśva, Āryadeva, Kumāralabdha, Charaka, Nāgārjuna, Saṅgharakṣa and Agesilaos.	
1st century A.D.	The Mādhyamika School of Nāgārjuna.	

1st to 2nd century A.D.	Arikamedu on the Coromandal Coast, an emporium of trade with the Mediterranean world. A temple of Augustus built at the port of Muzyris. Yavana settlements at Kaveripaddinam and other ports, and cloves and nutmegs exported to the Roman Empire (described in the Periplus of the Erythraean Sea, c. 80–100).
73 B.C. to A.D. 318	The maritime empire and enterprise of the Śātavāhanas in the Deccan. Yajñaśrī Śātakarṇi's coins bearing the device of a two-masted ship, which suggests his naval power.
	Introduction of Buddhism into Thaton in Burma, as revealed by the Mons chronicles.
1st century B.C. to 7th century	The maritime empire and enterprise of the Pallavas, who adopted a planned policy of colonisation in Further India and Indonesia from the beginning, owing to constant pressure from neighbours.
1st century A.D.	Foundation of Hindu colony in Kambuja by Kauṇḍinya.
2nd century	Hindu colony in Champā founded by Śrī-Māra. Earliest Sanskrit inscription found at Vo-Chanh in an early South Indian script.
	Hindu colony in the Malay peninsula founded by Langkesu and his son Bhagadatta.
	Foundation of Hindu colony in Western Java by Devavarman.
1st to 2nd century	The art of Amarāvatī, and its influence upon colonial art in Burma, Siam, Java and Sumatra.
	The art of Mathurā, Vidiśā and Padmāvatī.

1st or 2nd century	Guṇāḍhya's Bṛihatkathā, comprising popular tales about the trade and adventure of heroes of the sea, including their sojourns on the islands of Kaṭāha, Karpūra and Suvarṇa in Dvīpāntara Bhārata.	
1st to 7th century	The Indo-Greek art of Gandhāra. Its diffusion to Bamiyan, Bactria, Khotan, Miran, Kucha and Turfan.	
2nd century	The Lalitavistara.	
2nd or 3rd century	The Saddharma Puṇḍarīkā and Āryaśūra's Jātakamālā.	
260	The Chinese monk Chu She-hing studies Buddhist scriptures from the Indian monks of Gomati-vihāra, Khotan.	
265–316	Chinese translation of the Divyāvadāna and the Saddharma-puṇḍarīka Sutra.	
2nd to 3rd century	The Gothic phase of Gandhāran sculpture.	
3rd to 4th century	The Bamiyan Buddha colossi (120 to 175 feet high), overlooking the route to India across the valley of the Hindukush and Kohi-baba, which provided the models for the gigantic Buddha statues at Yun-kang and Lung-men in China, and at Nara in Japan.	*The Golden Age of Gupta Culture.*
300	Vyāsa-bhāṣya on the Yoga-sūtras.	*The Second Age of Asian Unity:*
	Śabara-bhāṣya on the Mīmāṃsā.	*Colonies and Kingdoms in Dvīpāntara Bhārata.* (A.D. 300–800).
c. 300–350	Asaṅga and Vasubandhu, and the foundation of Yogāchāra.	
350–400	The Brahma-sūtra.	
3rd or 4th century	Īśvara Kṛiṣṇa's Sāṅkhya-Kārikā.	
4th century	A Kaliṅga princess carried off the famous 'tooth-relic' of the Buddha from Dvīpāntara to Siṅghala.	

	Colonisation of Champā, indicated by Bhadravarman's Sanskrit inscription concerning the installation of a Śiva-liṅga.
	Colonisation of Borneo, indicated by Kutei inscription mentioning the installation of a jūpa and a gift of cows.
344–412	The great leader of Chinese Buddhism, Kumārajīva, and his mission to the Chinese capital, Ch'ang-an (401–412), where he translated about 100 Buddhist texts, contributing more to the spread of the Mahāyāna in China than any other monk-scholar.
412–434	The visit of Mahāthera Buddhaghoṣa to Ceylon and Thaton.
320–535	The Great Gupta Empire. References in inscriptions and literature to its suzerainty over Northern India, the north-western borderland of India as far as Balkh, Ceylon and the islands of the Indian Ocean. Embassy of King Meghavarṇa of Ceylon to Samudragupta (*c.* 360).
c. 456	Hun invasion of India. Skandagupta's memorable victory over the Huns and his assumption of the title of Vikramāditya.
390–400	End of Sassanian rule in Śakasthāna (*c.* 284–400).
400–445	The works of Kālidāsa, ushering in the golden age of classical Sanskrit.
400	Śrutavarmā, probably of Pallava extraction, ruler of Kambuja. Śaivism, Vaiṣṇavism and Buddhism prevail together, as indicated by inscriptions.
414–454	The foundation of Nālandā University by Imperial Gupta endowments.

475	The foundation of Valabhī University by the Maitreka kings.
5th century	Overseas enterprise indicated by four inscriptions in Northern Malaya containing the name of the Mahānāvika (the great navigator) Buddhagupta of Raktamṛittika, in Bengal, whose donations are recorded.
	Early Indian missionaries to China.
414–421	Dharmakṣema's visit to China from 'Central India'.
420	Saṅghavarmi's visit to China from Ceylon.
429	Buddhabhadra's visit to Nanking and his translation of the Avataṃśaka sūtra.
431–437	The Kashmir monk-prince Guṇavarman visits Nanking, after studying in Ceylon and preaching Buddhism in Java (*c.* 423).
433–434	Batches of Buddhist nuns travel from Ceylon to China.
435–443	Guṇabhadra travels from India to China, where he translates the Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra.
5th century	Visit of 61 Chinese pilgrims to India. Fa Hien (399–414).
476–499	Āryabhaṭṭa, the famous mathematician.
5th–7th century	The efflorescence of Buddhist and Brāhmanical art. Classic examples of Buddhist art at Mathurā, Sārnāth and Ajantā; and of Brāhmanical art at Deogarh, Udayagiri and Aihole.
5th century	Frescoes at the royal palace at Sigiriya (Siṃhagiri) in Ceylon, which bear the impress of the Ajantā style and its motifs.

5th to 10th century	The Buddhist art of the cave temples at Yun-kang (398–493), Lung-men (after 493), and Tun-huang in China, during the Wei and T'ang periods, which bears the impress of the styles of Gandhāra and Ajantā.
528	Introduction of Buddhism into Korea.
533	Yaśodharman finally defeats the Hun power under Mihiragula.
538	Introduction of Buddhism into Japan.
604	Adoption of Buddhism as the national religion of Japan.
600–650	The Tibetan king Srong-tsan Gam-po's invasion of Northern India, the introduction of the Indian alphabet and script from Kashmir, and the construction of the first Buddhist temples in Tibet.
606–647	Harṣa Śīlāditya and the revival of Mahāyāna Buddhism.
641	Harṣa's embassy to China.
643–657	Wang-hiuen-tse's three missions to India.
684	Introduction of Mahāyāna Buddhism into Sumatra (Palembang), as indicated by inscription.
7th century	Visit of 56 Chinese pilgrims to India.
c. 7th century	Gauḍapāda, author of the Kārikā and spiritual grandparent of Śaṅkara.
630–643	Hiuen-Tsang in India.
671–695	I-tsing in Śrīvijaya and Nālandā.
6th to 8th century	The romantic and cosmic medieval Brāhmanical art at Bādāmī, Ellorā and Elephanta, under the influence of Purāṇic Hinduism and Tāntrikism.
7th century	The monolithic rock shrines of Māmallapuram, under the Pallavas.

725–1107	The Great Pāla Empire.	*The Third Age of Asian Unity: The Tāntrika Renaissance of culture and art and missionary activities in Nepal, Tibet, Further India and Indonesia.* (700–1200).
8th to 10th centuries	The Pāla and Sena school of sculpture, and its influence on the art of Nepal, Tibet, Burma, Siam, Sumatra and Java. Classic examples in Pahārpur, Vikrampur. Murshidabad and the Twenty-four Parganas. An elegant yet vigorous school of painting, recalling the traditions of Ajantā and Ellorā, as revealed by illustrations of various Vajrayāna deities on palm-leaf Prajñāpāramitā manuscripts dating from the ninth to the end of the twelfth century.	
750–1000	The art and architecture of Bhuvaneśvara.	
706–762	The mission of Śāntarakṣita to Tibet, and the foundation of the first regular Buddhist monastery at Bsam-ya. His associates Kamalaśīla and Padmasambhava (747). Tibetan list of the disciples and teachers who succeeded him: Padmavajra, Anaṅgavajra. Indrabhūti, Lakṣmīṁkarā, Līlāvajra, Dārika, Sahajayoginī Chintā, and Dombi Heruka.	
778	Introduction of Buddhist Tāntrikism into Java from Bengal, as indicated by inscription dedicated to Ārya Tārā in the temple at Kalasam established by Kumāraghoṣa.	
788–828	Śaṅkara, his philosophical digvijaya of India and the foundation of his four scholastic monasteries.	
802	Introduction of the mystic cult of Devarāja (Chaturmukha Śiva liṅga), with four Tāntrika texts, into Cambodia, as mentioned in Sisophan inscription. Devarāja temple built by Jayavarman II.	
7th to 8th century.	Rise of the agni-kula, or fire-born, Rajputs, the Pawār, the Parihār, the Chauhān and the Solaṅkī, from the racial intermixture.	*The Rajput Renaissance* (*c.* 800–1100).

725 to 1018	The empire of the Pratihāras of Kanauj.	
1000	Abhinavagupta.	
1018–1055	Bhoja of Dhārā.	
1106–1138	Lakṣmaṇa Sena of Navadvīpa.	
1153–1164	Vigraharāja IV Chahamāna of Ajmer and Kanauj	
c. 1170	The Gītagovinda of Jayadeva.	
c. 1200	The Pṛithvirāja Vijaya.	
950 to 1050	The art and architecture of Khajurāho and Mahobā under the Chandel Rajputs.	
c. 900–1200	Matsyendranātha or Luipāda, founder of Nāthism (second half of tenth century)	*The Age of the Siddhāchāryas and Nāthagurus of the North* (c. 900–1200).
	Gorakṣanātha (10th century), Kṛiṣṇapāda, Tailikapāda, Naropa and Sarahapāda.	
c. 950	The Chinese monk Che-yi visits Bodh-Gaya, as mentioned in an inscription engraved on a stone slab depicting the seven Buddhas.	
8th to 12th century	The great Buddhist monasteries in Magadha and Gauḍa: Nālandā, Vikramaśīlā, Somapura, Odantapurī, Jagaddala, Paṇḍubhūmi, Traikūṭaka, Devīkoṭa, Vikramapurī, Paṇḍita, Sannagara, Phullahari and Paṭṭikeraka; centres of the Vajrayāna and Sahajayāna, which dominated the learning and culture of Nepal and Tibet in the North, and Further India and Indonesia in the South.	
c. 950–	Old Bengali Charyāpadas	
1043–1053	Dīpaṅkara Śrījñāna, the Bengal Pandit and High Priest of Vikramaśīlā monastery, preaches the Mahāyāna in Tibet.	

1038–1122	Mila-rapa, the poet-mystic of Tibet, whose doctrine of Lam-Chung is equivalent to Sahaja.	
10th to 12th century	Sahaja sculpture of Umāliṅgana throughout Eastern India.	
c. 600–1000	The sages of South India: Adiyars and Alvars (c. seventh to ninth century), the harbingers of the Rāmānuja-Rāmānanda tradition.	*The Age of the Mystics of the South* (c. 600–1000).
1000	Nāthamuni's compilation of the Prabandha.	
c. 900–1000	The Śrimad Bhāgavatam, the fountainhead of the Bhakti movement throughout India, composed at Kāñchipuram.	
11th century	The maritime empire of the Cholas. Buddhists from Sumatra and Java establish settlements at Negapatam; Rājarāja Chola (985–1013) builds two Buddhist temples, which continue to be visited by foreign pilgrims until the fifteenth century. The discovery of Chinese coins, celedin etc., of the Śuṅga period in the Tanjore district testifies to brisk commerce with China.	
1012–1035	Rajendra Chola's conquest of Malaya, Siam and Sumatra. Dhanapata's Tilakamañjarī (eleventh century) gives a vivid description of a naval expedition from India to Indonesia.	
1037–1137	Rāmānuja expounds the principles of Viśiṣṭādvaita (qualified monism).	
1165	Nimbārka reconciles monism and dualism.	
1199–1200	Destruction of Buddhist monasteries in Bihar and Bengal.	
1197–1276	Madhva, defender of dualism and pluralism and opponent of Śaṅkara.	

732–1250	The Buddhist Śailendra Empire of Śrī Vijaya, and its contribution to the development of Tāntrika literature, religion and art. A Nālandā inscription (840) records that King Balaputradeva of the Śailendra dynasty requested the King of Magadha to purchase on his behalf five villages, and to present them to Nālandā University for the maintenance of a monastery for foreign students. A Chinese writer, Chau Ju-Kua (1248–1258), mentions Ceylon as a vassal state of Śrī Vijaya.
715–825	The colossal stupa at Borobodur and the Thousand Temples at Prambanam. Final culmination of the plastic ideal.
800–1220	Hinduised Cambodian culture reaches its climax.
889–1200	The colossal temples of Angkor Thom (Nagaradhāma). The first capital founded by Yaśovarman (889–910) at Yaśodharapura. A new capital founded by Jayavarman VII (1181–1201), with the Bayon and its fifty towers as its centre and temple-mountain. Symbolic architecture and sculpture in the gigantic Baroque style, appropriate to the complexity of Hindu and Buddhist Tāntrikism.
847–1298	The Thousand Pagodas of Pagan, showing the further evolution of Hindu and Buddhist sculpture under the Palas and the Senas.
1268–1292	Kṛitanagara, the last Hindu king of Singasari in Java and exponent of Tāntrikism.
1294–1478	The kings of Majapahit in Java. Javanese versions of the Indian epics composed.
1315	Sha-lo-pa's compilation of Buddhist scriptures in Chinese, one of the last done by an Indian monk in China.

1365	A Javanese text mentions a large, continuous migration of people to the capital of Java from Karnāṭaka and Gauḍa.
1442	Inscriptions in Upper Burma mentioning a gift to the Buddhist monastery of a text belonging to the school of Matsyendranātha.
1478	Muslim conquest of Java.
1336–1614	The Empire of Vijayanagara.

Bridges between Hinduism and Islam: the Bhakti and Sufi movements (1400–1800).

1299–1410	Rāmānanda, the leader of the Bhakti movement.
1410–1518	Kabīr.
1449	Shah Musa of Ahmadabad, Sūfī.
1469–1538	Nānak
1481–1533	Vallabhāchārya defines the categories of Bhakti after the Bhāgavata.
1473–1480	Maladhar Basu translates the Bhāgavata into Bengali.
1485–1538	Chaitanya, the God-intoxicated founder of Bengal Vaiṣṇavism.
c. 15th century	Jīva Gosvāmī and Baladeva Vidyābhuṣan develop the theology and philosophy of Bengal Vaiṣṇavism.
1498–1546	Mīrābāī.
1494	Jayasī Sūfī.
1532–1623	Tulasīdās, author of the Rāmacharita Mānasa.
1572	Shaikh Salim Chisti.
1544–1600	Dādū.
1563–1624	Shaikh Ahmad of Sirhind, Sūfī.
1548–1598	Ekanātha.

1642	Abdul Haq of Delhi, Sûfî.	*The Mughal Cultural Renaissance* (*c.* 1600–1700).
1582	The Din-i-Ilahi of Akbar.	
16th to late 18th century	Schools of Mughal and Rajput paintings.	
1593–1603	The proletarian kâvya of Mukundarâma in Bengal.	
1600	Agents of the East Indian Company arrive as suppliants asking leave to trade with the Moghuls.	
1604	Compilation of the Granth Sâhib of the Sikhs.	
c. 1650	Dara Shukoh's Majma-ul-Bahrain. Kavîndrâchârya, one of Dara's teachers. The Saints of Paṇḍharpur.	
1608–1649	Tukârâm.	
1608–1681	Râmdâs Samarth.	
1670–1728	Śrîdhar's Râmavijaya.	
1627–1680	Śivâjî and the Hindu resurgence.	*The Hindu Revival* (1600–1800).
1674	Coronation of Chhatrapati Śivâjî.	
1666–1708	The Sikh ethical and political movement: Guru Govind, hero and poet.	
1780–1839	Maharaja Ranjit Singh, of the Punjab.	
1645–1671	Syed Alawal of Roshang, Sûfî.	
1668–1725	Yari Sahib, Sûfî.	
1680–1758	Bullah Shah, Sûfî.	
1693–1768	Keshava Das, Sûfî.	
Born 1665	Jagjivan Das, founder of the Satnami sect; composer of the Gyan Prakash.	
1700–1750	Prana Nath.	

1703–1753	Charan Das of Alwar.	
1700–1780	Dariya Saheb of Bihar.	
1718	Ram Prasad Sen of Bengal.	
c. 1700–1769	Aulechand of Nadia.	
1717–1778	Garib Das of Rohtak.	
1719–1798	Ramcharan.	
1780–	Sahajananda Swami of Jetalpur.	
1757–1825	Paltu Das.	
1771	Dedh Raj.	
1773	The Regulating Statutes altering the duties of the British from traders to administrators.	
1774–1833	Rammohan Roy, the first of the Indian moderns.	*The Indo-British Renaissance* (1800–1950).
1778	Foundation of Bengali printing by the Serampur missionaries.	
1781	Establishment of madrasa in Calcutta.	
1782	Establishment of Sanskrit College at Banaras.	
1704	Foundation of the Asiatic Society of Bengal by William Jones.	
1800	Establishment of Fort William College.	
1802	Abolition of infanticide.	
1813	East India Company's monopoly of trade ceases.	
1817	Foundation of the Hindu College by David Hare.	
1827–1883	Dayananda Sarasvati, founder of the Arya Samaj.	
1829	Abolition of sati.	

1833	The East India Company ceases as a trading corporation. The policy of employing Indians in positions of trust proclaimed as a matter of principle.
1834	Establishment of the Medical College in Calcutta.
1834	Macaulay's Minute on Education.
1830–1894	Bankim Chandra Chattopadhya, the father of modern Indian fiction.
1834–1886	Ramakrishna.
1838–1884	Keshavachandra Sen's Navabidhan.
1848–1925	Surendranath Banerjee.
1849	Establishment of Bethune School for Girls in Calcutta.
1856	The University Act.
1857	The Revolution.
1858	Queen Victoria's Proclamation.
1861	Introduction of the Indian Penal Code.
1861–1941	Rabindranath Tagore.
1863–1902	Vivekananda.
1867	The Prarthana Samaj.
1869–1948	M. K. Gandhi.
1875	The Indian Association.
1878	The Vernacular Press Act.
1881	The Indian Factories Act.
1885	The Indian National Congress founded by Surendranath Banerjee.
1891	The Age of Consent Act.
1906	The National Council of Education, Bengal.

	The Indian School of Painting: Abanindranath Tagore.
	The Revolutionary Movement; Subhas Chandra Bose (1897–1945).
1920–1924	The Non-Cooperation Movement launched by Gandhi.
1947	Partition of India into the two States of India and Pakistan.
1950	The establishment of the Republic of India. Rajendra Prasad, President of India. Jawaharlal Nehru, Prime Minister of India.
1951–1961	The First and Second Five-year Plans.

INDEX

Asian unity, ages of, 28–31, 36

J

N

Q

R

DESCRIPTION OF PLATES

DESCRIPTION OF PLATES

1. *Earth Goddess from Bangkok—Frontispiece.*—This is an ancient motif from the Indian motherland. In Buddhist representation she is the perennial witness of the Bodhisattva's acts of merit in his successive births (*dānapāramitā*). Her hair is the repository of the consecrated water of gifts that still flows for the benefit of entire humanity.

2. *Sanchi Stūpa.*—The Sanchi Stūpa symbolizes in Indian art the Demise of the Buddha. Its reliefs embody the perfect harmony in artistic treatment of man, animal and vegetation, linked together in the procession of Life and Human Action (*karma*), and constitute some of the immortal creations in world sculpture. There is yet another harmony achieved from the earliest mounds, temples or monuments constructed in the country—the harmony between the arts of architecture and sculpture. All architecture in India from Sanchi downwards is sculpture writ large. All sculpture sprouts and blossoms on the architectural tree, underlining and embellishing it by its own rhythm of lines and masses.

3. *Śuṅga Animal Sculpture.*—Due to the Buddhist spirit of compassion, animal sculpture in Bharhut, Sanchi and Sarnath reached a height of excellence outshining even Greek. There is a perfect blending in the expressiveness of man, of his animal kindred and of vegetation, each invested with a different degree of animation and feeling.

4. *Bull in Aśoka's Lion Capital.*—The plastic vitality and dignity of the Indus Valley bull are here renovated by a new spiritual and moral vision. In Buddhism the Bull is a symbol of perfection, this animal being mentioned along with the Lion, the Horse and the Elephant as supreme creations of the sub-human world. The Buddha himself is called 'the Bull among men.'

5. *Donors' Couples at Kanheri.*—Indian art is as successful in the expression of physical vigour and buoyancy as in that of spiritual poise and subtleness. These works bear the impress of the earlier sculptures of the Yaksas of Mathura and the guardians of Sanchi, but are much more refined. For in the intervening centuries rose and spread the legend of the Buddha that in its maturer Mahāyāna phase of development, contemporary with the Buddhist sanctuaries at Kanheri and Karli, formulated the doctrines of universal saviourship and universal Nirvāṇa. The donors, stirred by Mahāyāna *bhakti* and holding flowers of offering, stand still and erect in rapturous meditation before the Bodhisattva.

6. *Gandhāra Stucco Head.*—Here is foreign Romano-Bactrian art on the Indian soil of Afghanistan with its naturalistic treatment that in its expression of inner tensions anticipated in spirit and form European Gothic art. In the later centuries, under the influence of the schools of Mathura and Sarnath, this Roman provincial art was completely assimilated into, and overshadowed by indigenous norms of metaphysical rather than corporeal beauty underlined by metaphors and imageries of both religion and literature.

7. *Buddha of Sārnāth.*—This marvellous image of the Buddha delivering his first sermon at the Park of Antelopes near Banaras represents Gupta classic art, efflorescent in both poise and charm, vigour and fineness, and characteristic of a most favoured epoch in human culture. The stable triangular pattern, overhung by the circular nimbus, and the serene linear rhythm of modelling of the body that reflects the poise within, spread throughout Indian Asia, Middle, Eastern and South-eastern.

8. *Lotus Motifs from Sārnāth.*—In early Buddhist art the ceaselessly sprouting and blossoming lotus stalk symbolizes the self-actualisation of the Bodhisattva. In many relief panels the rhythm of composition is contained within or stressed by the dynamic oscillation of the rambling lotus foliage. All figures and scenes, men, birds, trees and fruits and the joys and sorrows of life, are caught in a vast all-pervasive swirl of consciousness moving continually forward towards Nirvāṇa. A row of rosettes separates the lotus from the Svastika design. Both the classical Indian motifs, the lotus and the Svastika, are endlessly repeated, imposing an abstract rule over the decoration that is dynamic in movement. From the Gupta period we come across ornamental and symbolical motifs often dominating and transforming the sculpturing of figures treated as part of the entire plastic composition.

9. *Bodhisattvas from Tun-huang.*—Art played a significant role in the spread of Buddhism in Middle Asia and China. Tun-huang lies on the Southern caravan route in Middle Asia, and became the centre of a Buddhist University that influenced the entire region from the 3rd to the 10th century A.D. These cave-shrines carved out of the mountains, as at Ajanta, Taxila, Nagarahāra and Bamiyan belong to the period of the Wei Dynasty under whom Buddhism first became the state religion of North China. The Bodhisattva figures here are supernatural and idealized as at Mathura, Sarnath and Nagarahara, and clearly show the influence of the classic Gupta art of India. From the holy land of Magadha to Kan-su in China we find a similarity of art and thought, shaped by the ideal of Mahāyāna Buddhism and the dream of the Asaṅgas, Kumāra-

jīvas and Huien-Tsangs that linked Indian with Central Asian and Chinese culture.

10. *Nara-Nārāyaṇa from Deogarh.*—By the fourth century, sculpture reached its maturity in India embodying silence and poise with elegance and clarity of forms in the images of the Buddha, Śiva, Viṣṇu and Jaina Tīrthaṅkara. Indian images thenceforward became voices of silence in which the pulsation of life is felt only in the gesture of the hands or fingers, the entire physical body dissolving into the ethereal, luminous, abstract body (*sūkṣma-śarīra*) of *Yoga* practice. Nowhere in the world has sculpture succeeded so well in revealing the rhythms of man's inner self as realized by *Yoga*. Nara-Nārāyaṇa is a metaphysical image of the Supreme Self, One in Two, both mortal and immortal, as the *Bhagavad Gītā* described it. It expresses marvellously the Upaniṣadic philosophical notions of transcendence and immanence that filtered in the Gupta age to the masses through the *Mahābhārata* where the legend of Nara-Nārāyaṇa is magnificently told.

11. *Viṣṇu from Deogarh.*—This sculpture embodies the Brahmanical metaphysical myth of the silence of Being before creation or the withdrawal of the cosmic Self into meditation. The ponderous mass of Viṣṇu reclines on the Serpent of Eternity which is his animal vehicle. In Indian art the serpent is associated with the mystery of human ensnarement and enlightenment, with self-delusion and self-illumination. In Tāntrika art in the Indian colonies the superhuman Serpent has become even more prominent. The panel below shows the Five Pāṇḍavas with their wife that were actors on the scene of the earth for the restoration of *Dharma* under the leadership of Kṛiṣṇa, the incarnation of Viṣṇu. Gupta art, both Brahmanical and Buddhist, treated many metaphysical myths.

12. *Avalokiteśvara Padmapāṇi from Ajantā.*—The Bodhisattv ais a prince and wears a tiara as a symbol of sovereignty. The tilt of his body and finger gesture suggest his compassionate approach towards world misery, characteristic of Mahāyāna *bhakti*. Not the monk Buddha, but Bodhisattva, who holds the lotus, is the symbol of human perfection as the consequence of the Mahāyāna blending of the self-absorbed *Yoga* and the self-giving Saviour, and has since the sixth century aroused veneration and engendered universal charity throughout the Buddhist world in Asia.

13. *Avalokiteśvara from Nālandā.*—Here the image of the same Bodhisattva embodies more majesty and competence than charm and grace. These are underlined by the solidity of his body and the verticality of the lotus foliage symbolizing the notion of Becoming.

14. *Bodhisattva from Kauśāmbī.*—The figure here superbly combines profound introspectiveness and serenity with ease and elegance.

15. *Female Figure from Nālandā.*—Radiant with sensuous charm, the image is more eloquent due to the flexion of the softly modelled hand and the gesture of the fingers—fixing the tilaka on the forehead. The other hand must have held the mirror. Her pose is the classic pattern of the tree-goddesses of Bharhut and Sanchi (Vṛkṣā).

16. *Gandharvas.*—Here sculpture has adopted the methods of painting, lending a lightness and buoyancy to the empyrean flight of the Gandharva couple.

17. *Maheśa-mūrti from Elephanta.*—This strange composite image of the Cosmic Spirit, Maheśa, three in one, is one of the grandest creations of plastic art in the world. The three faces of Siva embody the sovereignty of the real Self and the unity of consciousness. The dominant central figure is that of the real Self or Sadāśiva, all-full and all-silent, the unconcerned Witness (*Sākṣī*) of the phenomenal world. The two other faces of Śiva, Vāmadeva or Umā to the right and Bhairava or the Terrible to the left, are the empirical or lower selves that are ceaselessly astir and assertive, creating and destroying the world of appearances (*nāma* and *rūpa*). The eternal rhythm of Life and Death, creation and transformation of the universe comprise the pulsation of one's own Self. This sublime metaphysical image of the Supreme Self spread from India to Turkestan, China and Cambodia.

18. *Ardhanārīśvara from Elephanta.*—The broad and summary modelling of the image as it emerges from the unformed rock in the cave commands silence. This is in striking contrast with the jubilation of the flying angels above and the gods and goddesses on the sides who all offer their reverential homage to the cosmic spirit, Śiva-Pārvatī, Two in One.

19. *Lifting of Kailāśa from Ellora.*—Medieval cave sculpture records India's worship of power and tension in the cosmic and transcendental setting. What is mysterious and beyond-human manifests itself in the passion and aspiration of man. Here is the legend of the encounter of Śiva, all-poised and all-silent, with the ten-handed demon Rāvaṇa who in the height of his arrogance brings about a seismic disturbance shaking the foundations of the Gods' Himalayan abode. Pārvatī clings with fear to the arms of Śiva. Her attendant flees in terror into the cavern. Śiva, however, by an easy movement of his toe repels the peril. Contrasted with the movement of flight of Pārvatī's attendant is the poise of Śiva's sentinels on the right. The stern verticality of the postures of Śiva and of

his sentinels is set off against the soft, timid curvilinear approach of Pārvatī. The effects of light and darkness within the cave are superbly utilized to add a dramatic vigour to the plastic conception.

20. *Viṣṇu from Kanauj.*—This is a rare image of the cosmic form of Viṣṇu true to the grand description in the *Bhagavad-Gītā*. Gods, angels, men and creatures of the nether world are all comprehended in the cosmic body of the Supreme Being. There is a sense of awe, power and majesty breathed by the image.

21. *Celestial beauties from Khajuraho.*—In the Indian temples are imaged not only Goddesses but also angels, ministers and messengers of grace. Full of sensuous beauty, such lovely Women of the Gods are depicted in a seductive attitude, not derived from any human model as well as in self-transcendence and aloofness from the world in the contemplation of their own beauty before a mirror. The reflection symbolizes at once the illusion and sport of Śakti. In Tāntrika art and thought the appreciation of sensuous charm leads the devotee to Mahā-māyā who is the source at once of enjoyment (*bhukti*) and salvation (*mukti*) and bestows both worldly pleasure as well as spiritual bliss. The lavish multiplication of the images of Sura-Sundarī, apsara and danseuse (*nāyikā*) in every niche, recess and projection of the walls of the temple echoes the joy and exuberance of the feeling of immanence of Mahā-Śakti or Mahā-māyā in the world of senses.

22. *Dancing Apsarā from Khajuraho.*—This is a rare example of sculpture where the entire figure with its fluttering jewellery is borne by the vigorous movement of dance and yet is poised and balanced. From Amaravati to Konarak covering a period of about a millennium we find the sculptural genius of India modelling the feminine body in the boldest and freest ecstatic postures and movements (*atibhaṅga*) that overstep the imagination of Western artists.

23. *Gaṅgā from Mahanad.*—This black stone image superbly combines poise and charm. The linear rhythms of the beautifully composed drapery echo the waves of the river. The nimbus above the head is a stylistic treatment of the Tree of Wish-fulfilment, a ritual bath in the river being regarded as fulfilling all desires.

24. *Vasubandhu from China.*—The author of the famous work *Abhidharmakoṣa* and one of the founders of Buddhist absolute idealism.

25. *Hiuen-Tsang from China.*—He is depicted here as returning after 16 years of stay in India to his own country with a load of Indian manu-

scripts on his back. On the basis of the study of Mahāyāna absolute idealism the erudite Chinese monk-scholar and translator developed a new system of Chinese Buddhist philosophy which greatly influenced Chinese thought.

26. *The Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra from China.*—This illustrates the leading metaphysical doctrine of Mahāyāna Buddhism, that of Universal Nirvāṇa. All sentient beings on the earth shall become Buddhas. Thus the figure of the Buddha (with two attendant Bodhisattvas) is endlessly repeated. The lotus within the circle is the symbol of Bodhisattva, the human soul in the ceaseless process of becoming.

27. *Illustration from Tibet.*—Locating the various organs of the body and depicting various surgical instruments used for dissection.

28. *Mahākāla from Mongolia.*—Mahākāla is the Buddhist black god of Time. He is angry and flame-shaped, and holds in one hand the magic dagger and in another the skull cup. The entire design of the painting leaps up like angry and devouring conflagration which symbolises the subjugation of evil by goodness or the destruction of the cosmos. In a cognate form he is the god of wealth, one of the Defenders of the Faith.

29. *Lokeśvara from Bishenpur.*—Lokeśvara, Avalokiteśvara or Lokanātha was one of the most common deities which the Pāla Buddhist revival, based on the assimilation of the Mahāyāna with the Tantras, introduced into Eastern India and then into Nepal, Tibet and South-east Asia. He has an elaborate head-gear and holds a blossoming lotus flower by its stalk in his left hand, while the right hand bestows favours. The face blends serenity with profound compassion for the sorrow of the world. Pāla sculpture is distinguished by a superb mingling of a warm current of lyrical or romantic idealism with formalism and abstraction. The soft affectionate modelling of the limbs as well as the coherence of the drapery, jewellery and tender body echo the intense religious piety of the Buddhist renaissance. Lokeśvara or Lokanātha is the emanation of Amitābha Buddha, who promises salvation for all, and is even now worshipped in South-east Asia, particularly in Siam and Cambodia. But in India he is often a composite Śiva-Buddhist figure associated with the contemporary dominance of the Nātha tradition that merged Buddhism in Śaivism.

30. *Mañjuśrī from Birbhum.*—The Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī personifies transcendent wisdom in Buddhism. He is seated in the lalitāsana, wears a crown, holds a book on a lotus and shows dharma-chakra mudrā. This magnificent image combines transcendence with charm, majesty with elegance, characteristic of the evolution of the Gupta sculptural tradition

under the impetus of the Protestant religions and social currents of the Pāla-Sena age. Mañjuśrī along with two other Bodhisattvas, viz. Lokanātha or Avalokiteśvara, together with their five Śaktis or Tārās, were prominent Mahāyāna deities introduced throughout Bengal, Bihar and Orissa under the regime of the Pālas who called themselves Parama-Saugatas. Thence Pāla art became the vehicle of the spread of Buddhism to Nepal and Tibet and beyond the seas to Burma, Malaya, Siam and Indonesia. Fashioned in the metal-smooth black stone from the Rajmahal hills some of these images of the schools of Vaṅga and Kaliṅga epitomize the clarity and indrawn expression of past centuries and are immortal in the world of art.

31. *Viṣṇu from Bogra.*—This colossal figure with the goddesses Lakṣmī and Sarasvatī on the sides shows a remarkable poise and unity of composition. Garuḍa here is not a bird but a human vehicle with two wings on whom Viṣṇu sits cross-legged in serene meditation. The stillness of Viṣṇu is diffused throughout the entire image facilitating concentration of the mind of the *bhakta*.

32. *Śiva Nartteśvara from Rampal.*—This majestic image of Śiva in the Tāṇḍava dance posture was popular in Bengal and Orissa under the Imperial Pālas. Here the rhythm of Being and Becoming includes both heaven and the nether world, comprising gods and angels, nāgas, kinnaras and gaṇas who all witness the cosmic dance or themselves dance in unison. Instead of the dwarf under the foot (as in the South Indian Naṭarāja) we have Śiva's vehicle, the bull dancing in ecstasy with its face upturned in awe and adoration. A Naṭarāja image was found at Ujjain belonging to the 8th–9th century A.D. Evidently the Naṭarāja type emerged earlier in Northern and Eastern India than in the South where it appeared in stone sculpture at Tanjore and Gangaikondapuram only in the 11th century.

33. *Śiva Naṭarāja.*—A most profound motif embodying a basic conception of Hindu metaphysics and science, a key to the entire Hindu theory of nature, life and mind. The image of the cosmic dance of Śiva Naṭarāja incarnates the perpetual pulsation in the life of the mind and of the universe, rest and activity, manifestation and destruction. It magnificently records both supreme aesthetic comprehension and spiritual ecstasy.

34. *Śiva Chandraśekhara.*—It is the Kṛitamāliṅga type corresponding to the Umāliṅgana sculpture of Northern India of the earlier centuries. The Bhakti movement in the South led by the Vaiṣṇavite Alvars and the Śaivite Nayanmārs elevated both worship and conjugal life, and art became a fitting vehicle of the metamorphosis of familial affections into exquisite spiritual flowers planted in the temples of the Tamilnad.

35. *Gaurī*.—Her head-gear tapers from the base to the top with the finial, shaped like a crown of the lotus. The traditional springiness of the tribhaṅga pose is here underlined by the slimness of the waist and the transparent drapery and ornaments moulded to the underlying soft body.

36. *Kālāri from Tanjore*.—Śiva holds the usual emblems. On his right is Yama in dynamic movement coming to claim his victim Mārkaṇḍeya who clasps the Śiva-liṅga in terror. Śiva suddenly appears as his Deliverer. Such a representation has a striking resemblance with the Rescue of the Elephant by Viṣṇu sculptured in Gupta art and reflects the warm devotion of the Nayanmārs of South India.

37. *Lokeśvara from Siam*.—This bronze torso definitely bears the impress of Pāla sculpture. The art of the Pāla Empire influenced the Mahāyāna figure sculpture in Malaya and Java (after the close of the 8th century), the Tai sculpture of Northern Siam (in the 9th century), the sculpture and fresco in Pagan (in the 11th and 12th centuries) and, finally, the sculpture and decoration of the Bayon at Angkor Thom (in the 12th century). The sacred thread reaching below the waist and the ornaments exactly resemble those of Pāla images of the 9th century.

38. *Buddha from Borobodur*.—The poise, fullness and tender mellifluous beauty of the forms of Borobodur are reminiscent of the golden age of Pāla sculpture.

39. *Relief Panel from Borobodur*.—There are about two thousand of these bas reliefs that depict incidents of the previous lives of the Buddha according to the well-known Indian Buddhist texts. Ardent Mahāyāna *bhakti* underlies a most delicate, sensitive and affectionate modelling, with extraordinary attention to details of face, gesture and movement that has raised these relief-panels into sermons in stone not met with anywhere in the world.

40. *Buddha from Chandi Mendoet*.—This image superbly embodies the clarity and grace of classic Gupta sculpture of the Indian motherland.

41. *Relief from Prambanam*.—A legend of the *Rāmāyaṇa* is here portrayed. This is also an echo of the classic Gupta style as modified by later Pāla idiom. Like Borobodur, Prambanan is a stupendous art gallery recording the noble stories of the Indian homeland.

42. *Mahiṣamarddinī from Singhasari*.—This is a representation in Pāla style of a familiar Divine or Cosmic action often sculptured in the Indian motherland. The Divine retribution following an epic struggle is as easy

and spontaneous as its acceptance by the evil power—the demon Mahiṣa. Nothing reveals more the assimilation of the Indian ideology as well as the artistic treatment. Durgā is the Self or the Absolute in action or manifestation with all its struggle for freedom, goodness and repose. The docility of the almost feminine dwarf image into which the demon finally emerges from the buffalo shape, and whom the Goddess has caught by the hair before dealing the death-blow, symbolizes the happy consummation.

43. *Prajñāpāramitā from Singhasari.*—This exquisite image where feminine poise and charm are perhaps somewhat overlaid by elaborate decoration is reminiscent of Sena sculpture. Yet its stainless purity and perfect balance most superbly represent the void of Transcendental Wisdom, without attributes and qualifications. The apotheosis of the maternal principle reaches here a height hardly reached in the Indian homeland.

44. *Demons from Banteai Srei.*—The story is derived from the Mahābhārata. Classical Khmer art blossomed forth at Banteai Srei, literally 'The Women's Citadel,' with the inspiration derived from Indian and traditional styles. The sculptures on the pediments, depicting some of the Indian demonic episodes, and magnificently blending serenity and action, poise and violence with a broad dynamic rhythm of composition and rich and meticulous, tapestry-like carving, are some of the most marvellous specimens in world art.

45. *Churning of the Ocean from Angkor.*—The bas-relief is unique in its marvellous vitality and rhythm of composition stressed by the repetition of the parallel movements of gods and demons who resemble the anonymous soldiers of Mestrovic. They pull mightily on both sides of the central figure of Viṣṇu, who steadies the churning stick Mount Mandāra. Round the mythical mountain is encircled the Cosmic Serpent serving as the churning string.

46. *Śiva from Angkor.*—The enigmatic Mona Lisa smiles of these serene, transcendental faces, emptily yet steadfastly gazing at the four quarters from the Tower of Bayon have filled archaeologists and travellers alike with a sense of haunting mystery and grandeur, since Angkor buried in thick jungle for centuries was suddenly brought to light as one of the wonder cities of the world. Here human genius has reached one of its peaks in art and engineering under Indian influence.

47. *Cambodian Buddha.*—Here is a touch of the warmth of humanity with transcendentalism that places the figure by the side of the famous

standing images of the Bodhisattva of Mathura and of the Avalokiteśvara Padmapāṇi of Ajanta.

48. *Buddha from Sukotai.*—The image combines poise and suppleness, sternness and springiness in a manner that outstrips in excellence the well-known Birmingham figure from India. The warm and soft rendering of the lips, eyes and eyebrows is characteristic of early Sukotai style which achieves the miracle of turning metal into a living, moving body.

49. *Buddha from Anurādhāpura.*—This echoes the poise and clarity of the classic Gupta and Pallava styles of India, fused with the suavity and smoothness of expression that belong to the Sinhalese tradition.

50. *Vision of Paradise from Garhwal.*—Garhwal painting is an offshoot of the folk school of Kangra. The story depicted is derived from the *Srimad Bhāgavata*—the fountain-head of the Bhakti movement in India for more than half a millennium. The poor but pious Brāhmaṇa Sudāmā at the repeated importunate requests of his poverty-stricken, unimaginative wife undertakes the long and rough journey to Dwārakā to meet his old friend Kṛiṣṇa who is lord of Dwārakā. The dynamic rhythm of the landscape and of the colourful aerial visions of the poor man gives abundant evidence of the supreme sensitiveness of folk art developed in the isolation of the Himalayan hills.

51. *Return of the Cow-herds.*—Here is a pastoral scene in the twilight when Kṛiṣṇa, the Prince of Shepherds, returns with his herd of cattle. The solicitude of the mothers for the shepherd boys symbolises the soul's aspiration for God. Not merely motherly love and affection but also the sweet companionship of Kṛiṣṇa with Sudāmā and other shepherds, and with the herds of animals, lovingly depicted with adoring human eyes, are means to spiritual contemplation in these delightful domestic and outdoor scenes. The view from above enables the painter to behold and portray a series of synchronous scenes.

52. *Rādhā from Kangra.*—Here is folk-painting distilling the essence of symbolic poetry that delineates the aspiration of Rādhā for Kṛiṣṇa. Rādhā is the human soul. Her maids are preparing her for the dedication of all her charms to the Divine Lover. The secrecy of Rādhā's attachment and the intimacy of the toilet scene are set off by contrast with the symmetry of the white marble railing and the blankness of the scene.

53. *Pheasant by Mansur.*—Mansur was one of the great master-artists of the courtly Mughal school of painting who excelled in animal figuration. The meticulous observation of nature and passionate drawing

represent a trend that is foreign to truly Indian art and is attributed to the influence of European painting reaching India through Iran. Conversely Rembrandt copied some Rajput and Mughal paintings brought to the cities of Holland by the merchants of the Dutch East India Company.

54. *Śiva-Pārvatī.*—Rajput art was the outcome of the collective vision of the people that found the divine in the human and the human in the divine. Śiva and Kṛiṣṇa represent two contrasted eternal archetypes of human approach to the Divinity, of renunciation and of action respectively, comprising different accents of the human soul that the poets and painters of Rajasthan and Himachala understood and interpreted.

ILLUSTRATIONS



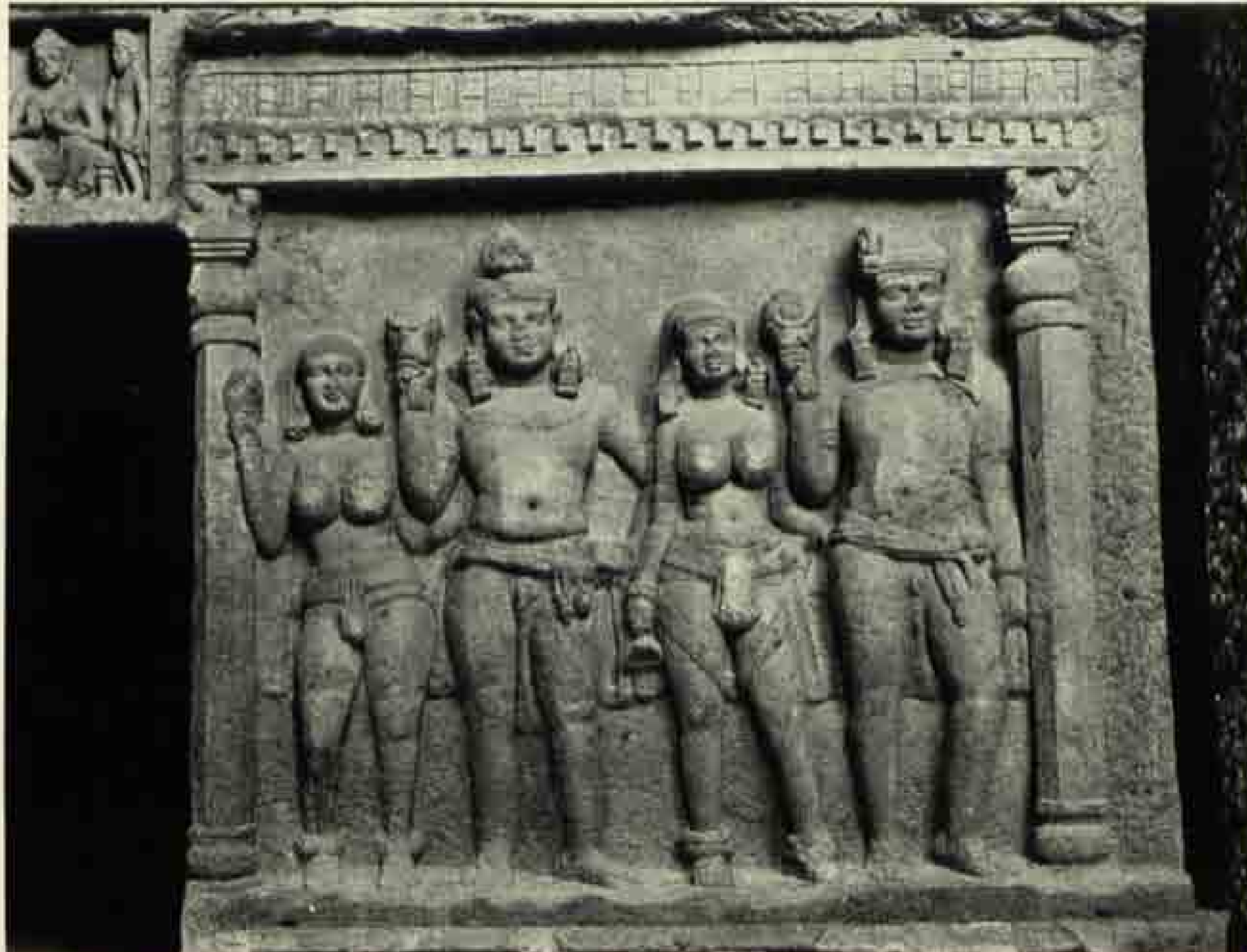
2. Western Gateway of the Sanchi Stupa. 2nd–1st Century B.C.



3. Sunga Animal Sculpture from a Pillar Capital at Sarnath. 1st Century B.C.



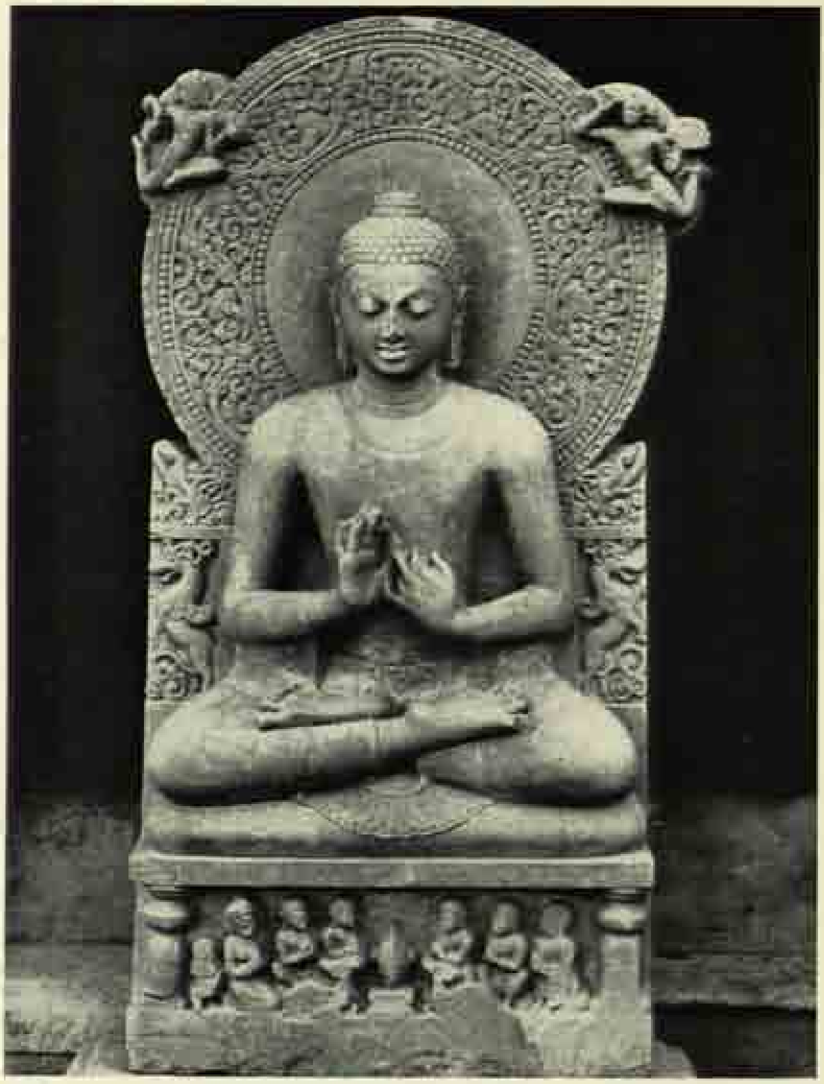
4. Bull in the Abacus of Asoka's Lion Capital at Sarnath, Mauryan Period



5. The panel of Donors' Couples in the Front Verandah at Kanheri. 2nd Century A.D.



6. Gandhara Art. Stucco Head from Hadda. 3rd–5th Century A.D.



7. The Buddha at Sarnath, 5th Century A.D.



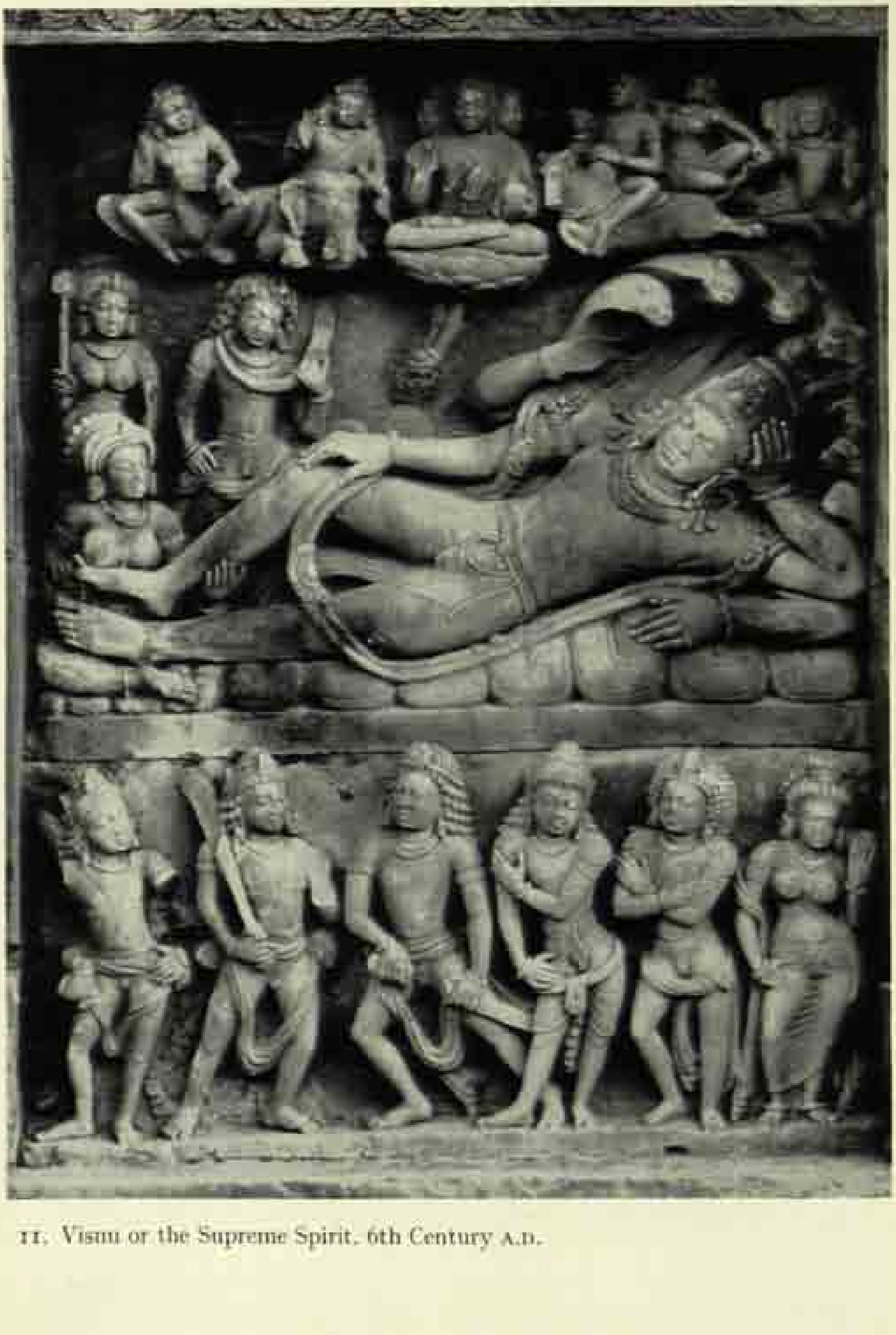
8. Lotus Motifs on the Buddhist Dhamekh Stupa at Sarnath. 6th Century A.D.



9. Bodhisattvas from the Caves of a Thousand Buddhas at Tun-Huang, China. 5th Century A.D.



10. Nara-Narayana at the Deogarh Temple. 6th Century A.D.



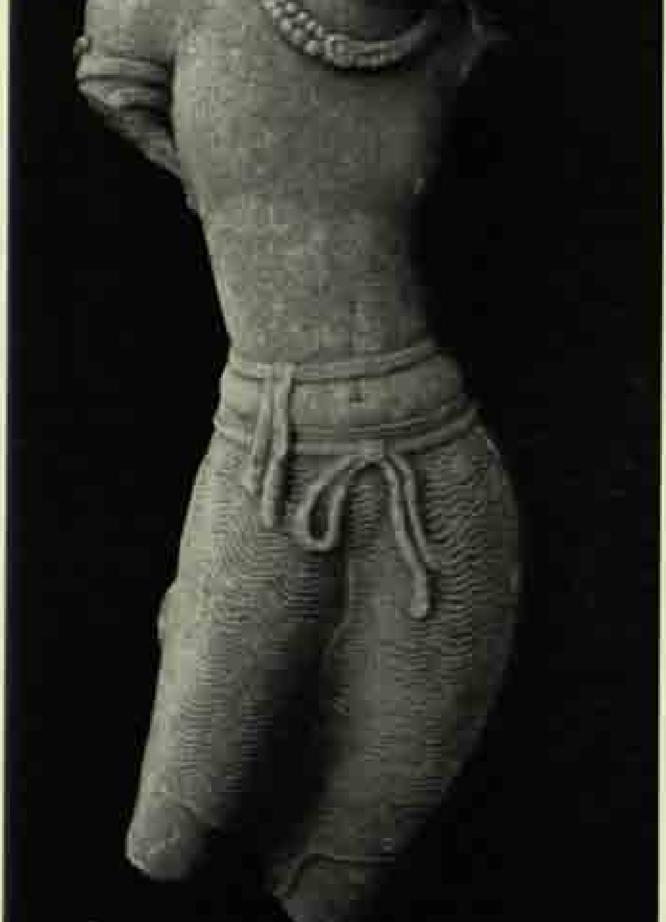
11. Visnu or the Supreme Spirit, 6th Century A.D.



12. Avalokitesvara Padmapani, or the Compassionate Bodhisattva of the Blue Lotus, from the Ajanta Caves, 7th Century A.D.



13. Avalokitesvara from Nalanda.
7th Century A.D.



14. Bodhisattva from Kausambi. 7th Century A.D.



15. A Female Figure from Nalanda, 7th Century A.D.



16. Gandharvas, Early Western Chalukya. 6th Century A.D



17. Mahesvara at Elephanta. 8th Century A.D.



18. Ardhanarisvara, or Siva half-male, half-female, from Elephanta. 8th Century A.D.



19. The Lifting of Kailasa by Ravana, Ellora. 8th Century A.D.



20. Visnu in his cosmic form, Kanauj. 11th Century A.D.



21. Celestial Beauties, Khajuraho, 11th Century A.D.



22. The Dancing Apsara. 11th Century A.D.



23. The River Goddess Ganga from Mahanad, West Bengal. 11th–12th Century A.D.



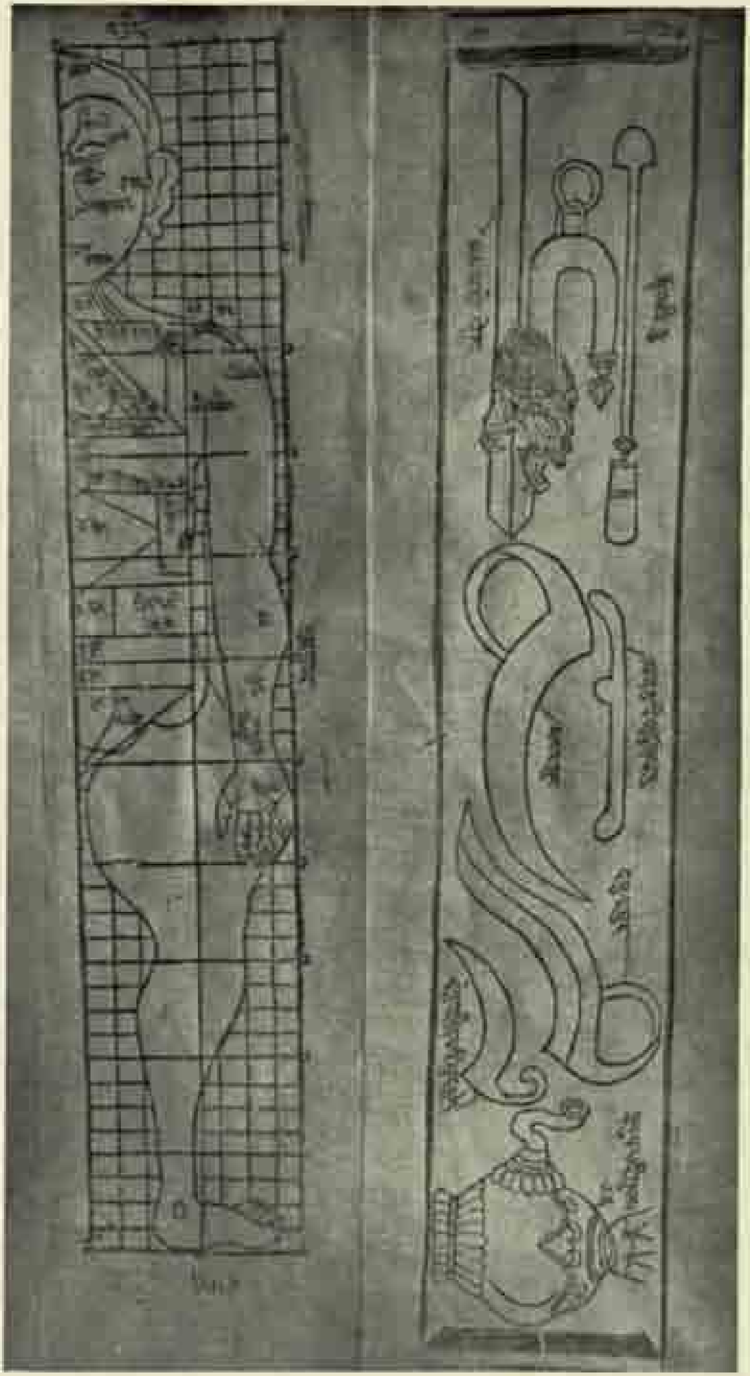
24. The Mahayana Buddhist Philosopher Vasubandhu. A stone engraving from China



25. The Chinese Pilgrim Hiuen-Tsang. A stone engraving from China



26. Scene from The Lankavatara Sutra. Chinese painting



27. Illustration from a Tibetan Treatise on Anatomy and Surgery



28. A painting of Mahakala from Mongolia



29. Lokesvara from Bishanpur—Tandwa in Bengal. Pala Period



30. Manjusri from Birbhum, Bengal. 11th to 12th Century A.D.



31. Vishnu on the back of Garuda from Bogra, Bengal.
About 1000 to 1200 A.D. Pala Period



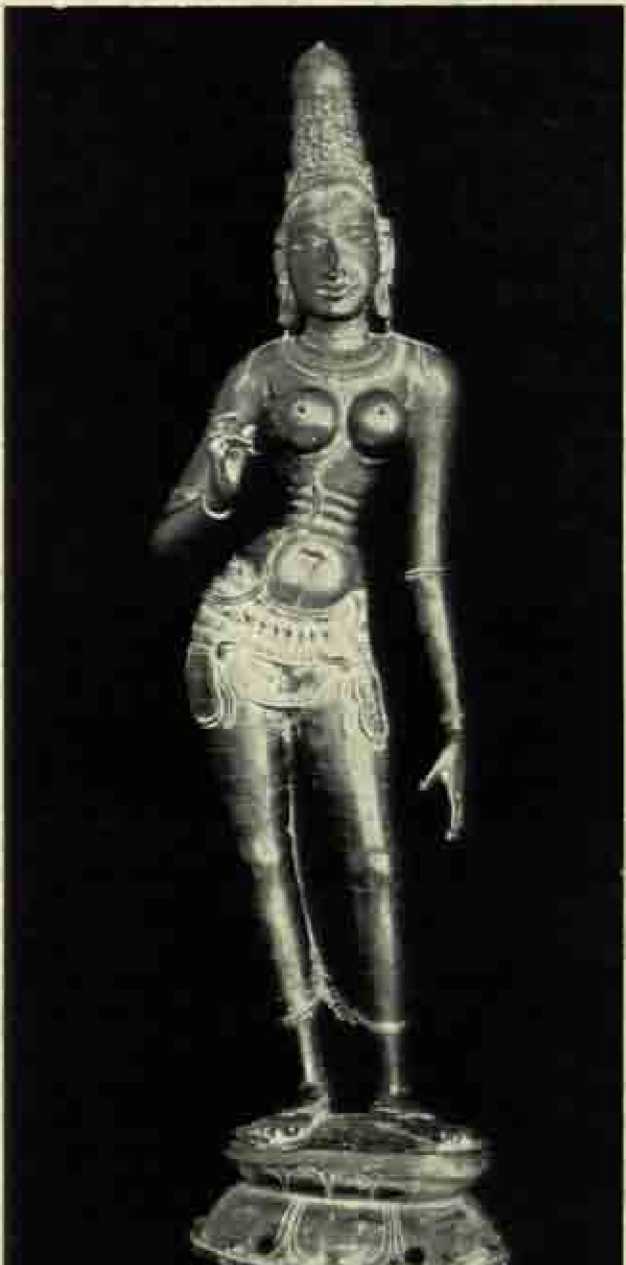
32. Siva Narttesvara from Rampal, Bengal, Pala Sculpture



33. Siva Natarājora The Lord of the Dance, A South Indian Bronze



34. Siva Chandrasekhara embracing his consort Gauri. A South Indian Bronze



35. Gauri or Parvati, South Indian Bronze



36. Kalari or Siva as The Vanquisher of Death, Tanjore



37. Lokesvara from Siam. 9th Century A.D.



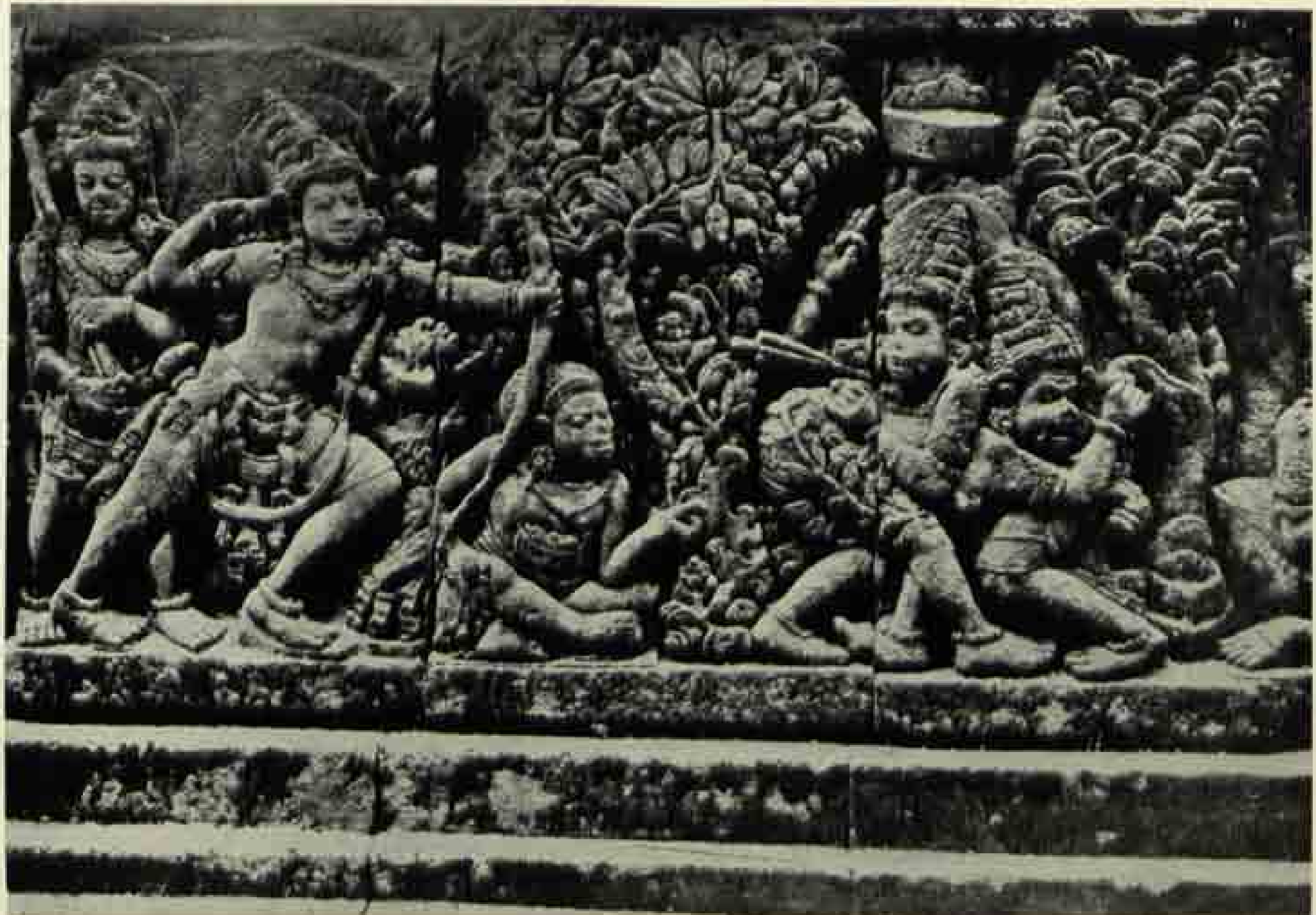
38. Buddha from Borobodur. 8th Century A.D.



39. Relief Panel illustrating the life of Bodhisattva, Gallery at Borobodur, 8th Century A.D.



40. Buddha at Chandi Mendoet, Java



41. Relief from Prambanan. 8th–9th Century A.D.



42. Durga Mahisamardini from Singarari, Eastern Java



43. Prajnaparamita or Sakti of the Adi-Buddha from Singarari



44. The Fight between the Demons for the Hand of Tilottama. Banteai Srei, near Angkor, Cambodia. 1st Century A.D.



45. The Churning of the Ocean, Angkor



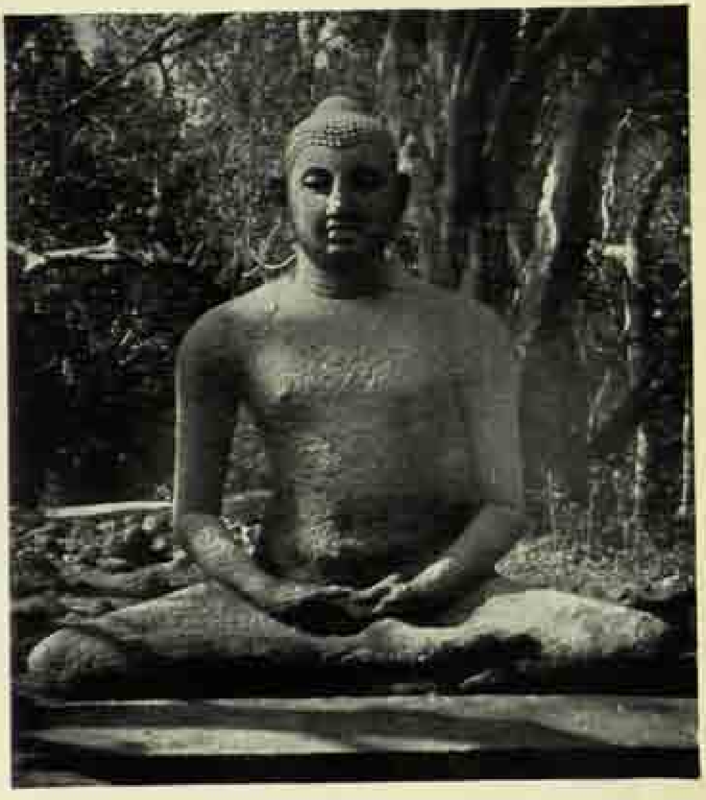
46. Four Faces of Siva, Tower of the Bayon, Angkor, 12th Century A.D.



47. A Cambodian Image of the Smiling Buddha



48. Bronze Image of the Walking Buddha from Sukotai, Central Siam



49. The Buddha in Meditation from Anuradhapura, 6th Century A.D.



50. The Pilgrim's Vision of Paradise. Garhwal Painting *c.* 1785



51. The Return of the Cowherds. Rajasthani Painting, late 18th Century



52. Radha at her Toilet, Kangra Painting c. 1790



53. Himalayan Cheer Pheasant
Signed: Mansur. Mughal (Jahangir Period): *c.* 1615



54. Siva-Parvati
Rajput Painting